

**National Self-determination in British Government
Policy during the First World War with special reference
to Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.**

**by
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Abstract

In 1914 the British government was not interested in national self-determination in eastern Europe, but by November 1918 it was deeply involved with various eastern European subject nationalities and was committed by implication to their independence. It was not legally committed to national self-determination but it could not have abandoned the subject nationalities without being subjected to accusations of bad faith against which it would have ^{had} the greatest difficulty defending itself. This thesis attempts to explain this evolution in British policy in the case of the Poles, Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs, the three most important subject nationalities in eastern Europe.

The thesis is based primarily on the official records of the British government which have been supplemented with material from private collections. The evidence from these records obliges us to believe, and therefore the thesis argues, that British policy on national self-determination developed not as a result of theoretical speculations but as a result of the war-time relations between the government and the Polish, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav nationality organizations. These relations were based not on the government's intrinsic interest in national self-determination or the subject nationalities but on its desire to use the nationalities as weapons of war. Considering it as an area of secondary importance, the government sought to use the political problems of eastern Europe to improve the Entente's strategic position. In November

1918 the government's stance on the issue of national self-determination in eastern Europe was, therefore, not the product of calculations of the long-term political advantages for Britain of the reorganization of eastern Europe but instead the product of its policy for the conduct of the war.

This thesis traces the evolution in British relations with the Polish, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav nationality organizations from August 1914 to November 1918. It shows how the initial contacts were established and how relations developed gradually as the government sought to use these organizations in propaganda, espionage and the formation of military units. It attempts to assess the effects of this co-operation on the attitudes of British officials and the policy of the government. It shows that the government's position in 1918 did not develop according to any preconceived plan but evolved as a result of numerous decisions made to solve immediate problems in the conduct of the war.

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Introduction

In nineteenth century Europe, nationalism was a frequent cause of international instability because of the attempts of subject nationalities to achieve unity and independence. Unsatisfied national aspirations were a constant threat to the status quo. In Britain, during the First World War, the cause of these subject nationalities was taken up and promoted by a group of scholars and journalists who might be called liberal nationalists in order to distinguish them from those liberals, like H.A.L. Fisher and Viscount Bryce, who were sympathetic towards subject nationalities but also suspicious of the doctrine of national self-determination because of its potential illiberal tendencies. The liberal nationalists, as part of their war-time propaganda, claimed that Britain had traditionally supported subject nationalities struggling to be free. Such an interpretation of British foreign policy during the nineteenth century might have produced effective propaganda but it was not history. While the British public might have sympathized with the struggles for independence of some nationalities, the government had always tended to support the status quo, but, when that was not possible, had preferred the creation of independent national states to the aggrandizement of great powers.

By 1914 the nationality problems in Europe had not been solved. Since unsatisfied national aspirations were an international phenomenon affecting almost every area of Europe, nationalism would inevitably play

an important role in any major European upheaval. The liberal nationalists claimed that the failure of the European system to satisfy national aspirations was the real cause of the conflict. It followed that the application of national self-determination would create a more peaceful Europe. The liberal nationalists' opponents, the pacifist liberals and left-wing radicals centred around the Union of Democratic Control, attributed the European conflict not to unsatisfied national aspirations but to secret diplomacy, the balance of power, the armaments race and imperial rivalry. All of these factors contributed to a tense international climate in which recurring crises were inevitable. But that was the normal state of international relations. None of them explain why this specific crisis, arising from the assassination in Sarajevo, led to war.

In 1905 the balance of power in Europe was tilted in favour of the Triple Alliance by the eclipse of Russia as a result of her defeat in the Russo-Japanese war. But German statesmen realized that this imbalance of power, which gave them much greater freedom of action in international affairs, was only a temporary phenomenon because military reforms in Russia would enable her, by 1917, to resume her former position in the European balance. The anticipated re-emergence of Russian power did not bode well for Germany's future position in Europe because there also existed the danger that Germany's only reliable ally, Austria-Hungary, would be seriously weakened, if not destroyed, by internal problems created by the subject nationalities. The major threat to Austria-Hungary appeared to be South Slav nationalism fostered by Serbia, the protégé of Russia. The apparent long-term trends in European relations tended to create the feeling within the Triple Alliance that if the

Serbian problem was to be solved it had to be done before 1917.

In the July crisis the German government undertook a calculated risk by advocating the use of force against Serbia. The Germans hoped that a localized war at this time, and on the pretext supplied by the assassination, would permanently solve the problem of South Slav nationalism at a time when Russia was not in a position, as she would be after 1917, to intervene. By the time the German government realized that it had seriously miscalculated, the crisis was out of control and the war could no longer be prevented. The essential factor in this crisis which distinguished it from previous crises and which made a peaceful solution impossible was the calculated risk on the part of the German government undertaken at the very beginning of the crisis. In essence Germany and Austria-Hungary adopted a position from which they could not retreat but which was unacceptable to the Triple Entente. The willingness of the German government to risk war can be explained by the imbalance of power which gave it some reason to think that the Entente would not interfere in a localized Austro-Serbian war. The German willingness to use force to solve a problem in international relations can be explained by the fact that previous German history, particularly the events of 1848 and 1870, seemed to teach the necessity of force. When the British foreign office attributed the war to Prussian militarism, an enormous over-simplification, it was more accurate than either the liberal nationalists or the Union of Democratic Control. The problem of unsatisfied national aspirations was an irritant in the European system which contributed to the July crisis, but it cannot be considered as the cause of the war.

Problems of nationality were important factors in the course of the war. This thesis analyses the British reaction during the war to the

national problems of eastern Europe, and the reaction to the desire of the subject nationalities for national self-determination. It concentrates on policy as it was applied during the war, not on the origins of any future policy. Events after November 11, 1918 are interesting but irrelevant. The study singles out and concentrates on the Czechoslovaks, Poles, and Yugoslavs because they were the only eastern European subject nationalities to conduct, throughout the war, extensive campaigns in Britain for national self-determination. They were, therefore, the only subject nationalities to have meaningful relations with the government. The campaign for national self-determination, in so far as it was conducted by émigrés, was conducted by the leaders of these three nationalities, and therefore the thesis concentrates on the government's relations with them.

During the war, the idea that national self-determination should be applied in eastern Europe was discussed by those interested in foreign policy. It began as the pet idea of a number of amateurs, but as the war progressed, the officials began to consider it seriously. In the first months of the war, émigrés representing the subject nationalities established contact with the government and offered their services to the Entente. When the co-operation proved mutually advantageous, complex relations developed between the government and the nationality organizations. British policy on national self-determination developed within the context of these relations.

Previous studies relating to British policy on national self-determination have confined themselves to the speculative discussions within the government on the future of eastern Europe. While not ignoring such evidence, this thesis concentrates on the action of the government in its co-operation with the nationality organizations. While hypothetical

statements abound in profusion, and are often worthless, the action of the government is real evidence of policy.

After failing to prevent the outbreak of hostilities, the government entered the war for essentially negative reasons: to prevent developments in Europe detrimental to fundamental British interests. Although the discussions in the cabinet during the crisis centred on the issues of the preservation of the great power status of France and of the neutrality of Belgium, the essential reason for war was to maintain the existing balance of power in western Europe. The two apparent issues were important, not because of their intrinsic merits, but as essential adjuncts to the real issue, the existing balance in western Europe. The balance of power in eastern Europe played no positive role in the British decision to declare war; it supplied only arguments in favour of neutrality, while national self-determination was not even an issue.

In 1914 it was obvious that, as a result of the war, there would probably be some changes in eastern Europe. The most obvious possibilities were either the expansion of Russia or the expansion of the Central powers. The British government had no specific desiderata in eastern Europe but it could not be indifferent to changes there because of their effect on the balance of power. Any change in the structure of eastern Europe which did not substantially increase German or Russian power, and which tended to promote stability, would be consistent with British interests. There was some hope that as a result of the war eastern Europe would acquire greater stability.

With the exclusion of the possibility of the expansion of one of the great powers, the alternatives which existed in eastern Europe ranged from the preservation of the status quo to the complete application of

national self-determination. Between these two extremes there were a number of compromise alternatives: self-determination might be given to some nationalities, but not to others. All of these alternatives could be said to be in harmony with essential British interests. The alternative which would produce the most stable system in eastern Europe was to be preferred, but there was no way to determine which alternative it was. The exponents of various programmes could dispute endlessly the merits of their cases, but they could not prove them. Since the evidence on the conditions in eastern Europe did not overwhelmingly favour one alternative over another, there was no reason, in terms of the final settlement, for the government to choose, during the war, one of the alternatives as its policy on the future of eastern Europe. As long as the war continued such decisions could be postponed.

During the war the government did not support the status quo, national self-determination or any compromise between the two. While supporting none of the alternatives, it was prepared to accept any of them. Until a decision on eastern Europe was absolutely necessary the government would await events. By avoiding a decision which might never have to be made, the government was able to avoid unnecessary commitments and to retain the maximum number of alternative courses of action. The inherent flexibility of this position enabled the government to meet effectively events as they arose. The course of events would either make a decision unnecessary or would provide more information upon which to base government policy.

While the government did not adopt a specific policy for the future of eastern Europe, many individuals in the cabinet and foreign office tended to have their own personal preferences. Many, possibly even a

majority, sympathized with the émigrés and preferred national self-determination. Such personal opinions and preferences were important in the development of British policy during the war, but they were just some of the great number of important factors in the determination of policy. They were certainly not synonymous with policy.

Strategic necessity made it impossible for the government to follow consistently the policy of maximizing its alternatives and minimizing its commitments. Situations arose in which it seemed necessary for the successful conduct of the war to adopt commitments. In each case, the nature of the commitment was not based on a programme for the future of eastern Europe, but was the product of the immediate situation and was designed to facilitate military success.¹ There were also instances in which the methods used to wage war, while not creating commitments, had unexpected repercussions which, in a subtle and complex manner, tended to restrict the government's future alternative courses of action. In other words, the government at times acted according to the necessity created by its own previous action. To some degree the methods of war, not the political considerations, determined the results.

The key factor in the development of British foreign policy on national self-determination during the First World War was not ideology but strategic necessity. It was not the only factor, but certainly the most important of many. In the interests of strategy, the government was able to overlook ideology, war aims, political considerations, and the inevitable peace settlement because national self-determination in eastern Europe was a

¹ This interpretation is not original. A.J.P. Taylor has argued that war aims were used as weapons of war. 'The War Aims of the Allies in the First World War', Politics in Wartime, London 1964, pp.93-123.

problem of secondary importance in relation to British interests. At the end of the war government policy on national self-determination was the result, not of any preconceived plan, but of a host of minor decisions often made without reference to the concept of national self-determination. By sacrificing political considerations for military flexibility, the government increased the odds of victory at the cost of losing control of the political consequences.

This thesis is based primarily on the official documents of the British government which have been supplemented with material from private collections. For simplicity, abbreviations used in the original documents have often been written in full in quotations, and the use of capitals has been avoided except, as in the case of the nationality organizations, where they are necessary to avoid ambiguity.

This study was done under the supervision of James Joll, Stevenson Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. I am indebted to him for his advice, assistance and encouragement which made it a pleasure to work under his supervision. For financial assistance, I am indebted to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Commission and the Canada Council. I would like to thank Lady Namier and August Zaleski for taking time to see me. I am grateful to Sir Steven Runciman for his hospitality while I examined his father's papers and to Hugh Seton-Watson for information about his father's activities during the war. I would also like to express my appreciation to all the institutions and individuals who assisted my work.

Chapter I

The Initial Contact. 1914

The outbreak of war in August 1914 necessitated a complete readjustment of foreign policy and diplomacy to a European situation which was entirely different in many respects from anything that had existed since the end of the Napoleonic wars. The resort to violence in place of negotiation in the conduct of foreign policy was destructive of diplomacy and of the restraints on each of the great powers. Violence shattered the sanctity of the status quo making the very structure of Europe an issue as it had not been before. Aims which had been unthinkable during peace, such as the complete destruction of another great power, now became a real possibility. The belligerents were confronted with new problems but also acquired new alternatives in foreign policy with which to solve them.

The British government was informed of many of the possibilities in eastern Europe created by the war by Polish, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav émigrés who on their own initiative established contact with the government. Thus began relations between the government and the nationality organizations; relations which were to become increasingly significant during the war. The government did not commit itself to national self-determination, but it did promote relations with the émigrés who appeared to be both informative and potentially useful.

Since public support was necessary for the successful conduct of the war, the government began, immediately following the outbreak of hostilities, to explain the decisions it had taken during the July crisis. The prime

minister, Herbert Henry Asquith, and some of his colleagues undertook to secure public support for the government's position through a series of public addresses. On September 18, 1914 Asquith, a liberal imperialist with a Gladstonian approach to continental affairs, said that the war was being fought:

In the first place, to vindicate the sanctity of treaty obligations and of what is properly called the public law of Europe; in the second place, to assert and to enforce the independence of free States, relatively small and weak, against the encroachments and violence of the strong; and in the third place, to withstand, as we believe is in our best interests not only of our own Empire, but of civilization at large, the arrogant claim of a single Power to dominate the development of the destinies of Europe. ¹

According to the official interpretation, that single power, Germany, under the inspiration of Prussian militarism, attempted to upset the balance of power in its own favour. The officials were aware that nationality problems had contributed to the crisis in the summer of 1914, but they considered Prussian militarism, not nationality problems, the true cause of the war. On September 5, 1914, the secretary of state for the foreign office, Sir Edward Grey, wrote to a public meeting:

It is against German militarism that we must fight. The whole of Western Europe would fall under it if Germany were to be successful in this war; but if as a result of the war the independence and integrity of the smaller European States can be secured and Western Europe liberated from the menace of German militarism, for it is not the German people, but Prussian militarism which has driven Germany and Europe into this war - if that militarism can be overcome, then indeed there will be a brighter and freer day for Europe, which will compensate us for the awful sacrifices that war entails. ²

Since Germany had caused the war, peace would be re-established when that country was defeated and its attempts to upset the status quo thwarted. There was reason to hope that such a defeat would so weaken the props of militarism that it would collapse under its own weight. Beyond doubt,

¹ The Times, 19 Sept. 1914.

² The Times, 5 Sept. 1914.

the defeat of Germany would ensure the basic requirements of British foreign policy such as the preservation of France and the restoration of Belgium. Neither the cause nor the cure for the war could be found in the territorial structure of Europe. Dissatisfied nationalism had certainly contributed to European instability, and therefore territorial modifications might be considered in the hope that the settlement would create a more stable Europe. But such measures were of secondary importance and were not to obscure the essential aim, the defeat of Germany.

The cabinet and the foreign office were reluctant to discuss, define or even contemplate any other aim. Discussion of territorial modifications so early in the war would be useless and even dangerous. On November 5, 1914, the Marquess of Crewe, lord privy seal and government leader in the house of lords, expressed government policy when he wrote to Viscount Bryce in reference to the reply to the speech from the throne:

I do not think it is possible now to lay down any principle, or even to express any opinion, on the terms upon which peace may ultimately be made. For one thing the issue still hangs too much in the balance for such discussion to be profitable, and for another too many parties are involved to make any present conclusion practicable. ³

The officials of the foreign office wholeheartedly supported that view, particularly the permanent under-secretary of state, Sir Arthur Nicolson, who never ceased to emphasize the futility of such hypothetical discussions.⁴ In reply to the ambassador in St. Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan, Grey wrote on November 5, 1914: 'Discussion of terms of peace is academic till war has progressed sufficiently to make Germany contemplate the most obvious

³ Crewe to Bryce, 5 Nov. 1914, Bryce Mss. E29.

⁴ Nicolson to Hardinge, 1 Dec. 1914, F.O. 800-276.

terms of peace such as the restoration of two lost provinces to France and evacuation of Belgium.⁵

Even if the moratorium on the discussion of war aims had not existed, it is unlikely that the future of eastern Europe or Austria-Hungary would have been seriously considered at the beginning of the war. Because attention was focused on Germany, the primary enemy, war was only reluctantly declared on Austria-Hungary as late as August 12, 1914. There were no conflicts with the Empire and no specific British aims in eastern Europe. The Habsburg monarchy might collapse, but this was not the aim of the British government. In fact, the idea of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary was considered from the very beginning; for, as the ambassador in Paris, Sir Francis Bertie, recorded in December 1914:

Grey then told me that seemingly well founded reports have reached him that Austria is inclined to separate herself from Germany and make peace with Russia. He does not think that there can be any objection either from a French or British point of view provided that terms can be arranged. We have no animus against Austria.⁶

Since it was not an issue, there is very little evidence from this period on the official attitudes to the future of Austria-Hungary. The possibility that the monarchy would collapse had been a matter of speculation for years, and its continued survival was a surprise to some like Sir Maurice de Bunsen, the ambassador in Vienna, who wrote in March 1914 to Nicolson: 'It is a standing marvel that the country still holds together.'⁷ Survive it did, aided by inertia and fear of the consequences

⁵ Grey to Buchanan, 15 Nov. 1914, F.O. 371-2174-71776.

⁶ Bertie, 18 Dec. 1914, F.O. 800-166-Fr.14-123. F.R. Bridge, 'The British Declaration of War on Austria-Hungary in 1914,' The Slavonic and East European Review, vol. XLVII, no.109, July 1969, pp.401-423.

⁷ E.T.S. Dugdale, Maurice de Bunsen, Diplomat and Friend, London 1934, p.283.

of its collapse. Alternatives to the monarchy, such as national self-determination, had not as yet been seriously considered by the British, few of whom had ever heard of the Yugoslavs or the Czechoslovaks.

There was, however, a perfect willingness to accept the destruction of Austria-Hungary if it became either necessary or inevitable. Many accepted the possibility with equanimity. On August 31, 1914 Winston Churchill, the first lord of the admiralty, wrote to Noel Buxton, a member of parliament: 'Sooner or later, Germany will be starved and beaten. Austria will be resolved into its component parts.'⁸ The British minister in Berne, E.M. Grant Duff, wrote on February 1, 1915: 'But the Austro-Hungarian Court and Bureaucracy are past praying for and signs are not wanting that the rocks are already in sight on which the Habsburg ship with its motley crew will finally go to pieces.'⁹ The collapse was clearly recognized as possible and, if necessary, acceptable. British policy was not designed either to maintain or destroy the Empire; the government would await events and accept either development. If the Austro-Hungarian empire was to survive, it would have to do so without British assistance. But if it could, there was no reason to destroy it.

In each of his public addresses Asquith emphasized the sanctity of treaties, the public law of Europe, the opposition to force and, above all, the rights of small states. These vague statements of outraged morality and liberal idealism can be used as evidence of the ideological interpretation given to the war by the Liberals, but without corroborative evidence they cannot be used as evidence of commitments on specific issues.

⁸ W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis, 1911-1914, London 1923, p.487.

⁹ Grant Duff to Grey, 1 Feb. 1915, F.O. 371-2241-41098.

The rights of small states were especially emphasized because the original crisis involved the two small states, Belgium and Serbia. Their treatment by the Central powers made good propaganda by appealing to the desire to defend the underdog. In every speech Asquith spoke of small states, and, probably tiring of the same phrase, he substituted for it small nations and small nationalities. On September 25, 1914, he said:

room must be found and kept for the independent existence and the free development of the smaller nationalities each with a corporate consciousness of its own. Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries, Greece and the Balkan States - they must be recognized as having exactly as good a title as their more powerful neighbours, more power in strength and wealth, to a place in the sun. ¹⁰

Each small nationality mentioned was a small state. On November 9, 1914, he again referred to nationalities:

We shall never sheath the sword which we have not lightly drawn until Belgium recovers in full measure all and more than all that she has sacrificed; until France is adequately secured against the menace of aggression, until the rights of the smaller nationalities of Europe are placed on an unassailable foundation, and until the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed. ¹¹

Asquith's usage of the term nationality is vague, and there is no other evidence of his opinion to elucidate the meaning of his remarks. In the propaganda for national self-determination the term denoted national groups denied a separate state, but it could also refer to a nation state. From the context of the speeches it appears as if he used the term to denote existing states. It is possible that later propaganda modified the usage of the term making these speeches appear more ambiguous now than they did then. Or possibly Asquith was careless in his choice of words. Although these remarks caused some confusion on

¹⁰ The Times, 26 Sept. 1914.

¹¹ The Times, 10 Nov. 1914.

the subject of war aims, it was never to the advantage of the government to clarify its position. Without further evidence, it is necessary to assume from the context of his speeches that he was only referring to small states. In The Truth About the Treaties David Lloyd George, the chancellor of the exchequer, in reference to Asquith's speech quoted above, stated that:

In effect that declaration merely assured the security of small independent countries like Belgium and Serbia against aggression of powerful neighbours. But there was nothing in the way of emancipating the oppressed races of Europe and the Turkish Empire from the bondage imposed upon them by alien conquerors. It was a war of protection for weak nations against arrogant and aggressive militarism and not a war of liberation for oppressed races. ¹²

Churchill, in some of his public statements, went much further than Asquith in his comments on nationality. On August 31, 1914, The Times published the following:

If we succeed, and if, as a result of our victory, Europe is re-arranged, as far as possible with regard to the principle of nationality and in accordance with the wishes of the people who dwell in the various disputed areas, we may look forward to a great relaxation and easement. ¹³

¹² D. Lloyd George, The Truth About the Treaties, London 1938, vol.II, p.752.

Harry Hanak; in Great Britain and Austria-Hungary During the First World War, London 1962, pp.57-58; in regard to Asquith's statements claims that the 'doctrine of nationality' was accepted as an official war aim by the government - whatever that means. In 'The Government, the Foreign Office and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918,' The Slavonic and East European Review, vol.XLVII, No.108, Jan. 1969, p.161, referring to the same statements, he implies that they meant something but refrains from elaborating. C.A. Macartney and A.W. Palmer; in Independent Eastern Europe, London 1966, p.39; in referring to these statements with overpowering common sense, write that: 'he was thinking in terms, not of self-determination, but of collective security; a speaker of a few years later, to express the same thought, would certainly have used the word "states" in place of "nationalities". No different meaning can be read into other official British pronouncements, couched in similar language.'

¹³ The Times, 31 Aug. 1914.

It is not clear whether Churchill was referring to all of Europe or merely to the disputed areas. His remarks were probably inspired by the Balkan negotiations in which he was particularly interested. Churchill was not stating an aim, a policy or a commitment - this is obvious from the text - he was stating a belief, common among officials, that the nationality principle, the drawing of political frontiers consistent with national divisions, was a convenient guide to foreign policy in disputes involving subject nationalities in which British interests were not directly involved. The idea had some appeal because it was democratic with the slight difference that people would be allowed to choose not necessarily their form of government but the country in which they preferred to live. On the basis of previous experience with nationality problems, particularly in the Balkans, it was assumed that the application of the nationality principle would be the best solution because it would satisfy the aspirations of those involved in the disputes. The satisfaction of national aspirations would contribute to the peace and stability of Europe. The nationality principle was, therefore, accepted by British officials as a means and not an end. In June 1915 Grey wrote to Bertie: 'The Allied Powers hope that, as a result of the war, the political balance in the Balkans will be established on a broader and more national basis, and thereby acquire greater stability.'¹⁴

The nationality principle was to be used to solve crises and to maintain the status quo by allowing for minor adjustments in political frontiers. If carried to its logical extreme, the nationality principle became national self-determination: the right of each nationality to

¹⁴ Grey to Bertie, 19 Jun. 1915, F.O. 371-2268-79008.

constitute a state and choose its own form of government. The two terms, often used interchangeably, might have been theoretically consistent, but were certainly different in practice. The application of national self-determination would have involved a complete revolution in the structure of Europe. The foreign office might use the nationality principle when it was expedient, but it could not accept national self-determination because it had neither the power nor the desire to revolutionize Europe. The foreign office dealt in compromise and the art of the possible, not in theoretical absolutes. The acceptance of the nationality principle was, in essence, the acceptance of a very limited and pragmatic form of national self-determination.

Yet in 1914, it was not an issue, and if attitudes existed in the cabinet on national self-determination, there is almost no evidence of them. But the Liberals, imbued with the traditions of Gladstone, were sympathetic to nationalities struggling to be free. John Stuart Mill had written:

When the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a prima facie case for uniting all members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart. This is merely saying that the question of government ought to be decided by the governed.¹⁵

Asquith had admired Garibaldi and had sympathized with the struggle for Italian unity.¹⁶ Churchill, Grey, and Lloyd George all professed sympathy for nationalism.¹⁷ In 1914 if they had been asked, in a purely

¹⁵ J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government, London 1968, pp.360-361.

¹⁶ R. Jenkins, Asquith, London 1964, pp.18-19.

¹⁷ The Times, 21 Sept. 1914.

hypothetical sense, whether they would like to see Europe divided according to nationality, they might well have said yes. If they had been asked whether Britain should enforce such a division, they would have undoubtedly said no. To answer otherwise would have been insanity because Britain so obviously lacked the necessary power. Sympathy is seldom of any value, but the attitude of the government made it very susceptible to the doctrine of national self-determination. The situation might be quite different if the government ever had the opportunity and the power to champion national self-determination.

The adherents of liberal nationalism disagreed with the official interpretation of the war in believing that it was caused, not by Prussian militarism, but by the failure of the European system to satisfy national aspirations. Unlike the officials, who had practical considerations, they believed that national self-determination should be applied to Europe. The disagreement was not on basic principles, but in degree and emphasis - between the practical and the theoretical.

In 1914 the liberal nationalists set out to convert the government to the doctrine of national self-determination. Their case was presented in a collection of essays published shortly after the outbreak of war called The War and Democracy. In the introduction Alfred Zimmern, formerly a fellow of New College Oxford, stated:

The political causes of the present war, then, and of the half century of Armed Peace which preceded it are to be found, not in the particular schemes and ambitions of any of the governments of Europe, nor in their secret diplomacy, nor in the machinations of the great armament interests allied to them, sinister though all these may have been, but in the nature of some of those governments themselves, and in their relations to the peoples over whom they rule. ¹⁸

¹⁸ A.E. Zimmern, 'Introductory', The War and Democracy, London 1914, pp.8-9.

In one of the essays entitled 'The Issues of the War', Robert W. Seton-Watson, the author of a number of works on Hungary, wrote: 'The Europe which we have known has gone beyond recall; the new Europe which is coming to birth will be scarcely recognisable to those who have known its predecessor'.¹⁹ He went on to suggest that Austria-Hungary should be broken up by the application of national self-determination. On nationality he wrote:

The principle of Nationality is not a talisman which will open all gates, for in some parts of Europe the different races are so inextricably intermingled as to defy all efforts to create ethnographic boundaries. This does not, however, affect the central fact that Nationality is the best salve for existing wounds, and that its application will enormously reduce the infected area.²⁰

The liberal nationalists supported the continuance of the war to a decisive conclusion even more strongly than some of the officials. Such support was necessary on the part of anyone who wanted access to the government because the officials could tolerate some disagreement but not opposition to the war itself. While the pacifists lost all influence in official circles by their opposition to the war, the liberal nationalists were able, despite disagreements, to increase their influence. Their absolute support of the war made them valuable to the government in its propaganda campaign. When the émigrés began to work in Britain for national self-determination, they found the liberal nationalists, some of whom they had known from before the war, valuable allies because of their official contacts and their knowledge of British politics. These allies were able to act as advisers and as links between the officials and the émigrés.

¹⁹ R.W. Seton-Watson, 'The Issues of the War', The War and Democracy, London 1914, p.240.

²⁰ Ibid, p.296.

While the government did not consider national self-determination, the future of Austria-Hungary, and other related questions of war aims and the future of eastern Europe, developments were taking place at the lower echelons of the administration which would bring these questions to its attention. The committee of imperial defense had decided, because of administrative and logistic problems, that in the event of war only enemy aliens considered dangerous would be interned. In 1914 the plan broke down because of the spy scare and the nervousness of the war office at the thought of enemy aliens being at large. The authorities began to intern all enemy aliens fit for military service, but the task was found almost impossible because of the number of aliens and the lack of facilities. Among the enemy aliens were Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats and Serbs who were citizens of enemy countries but were, in fact, friendly to the cause of the Entente.

In September 1914 two Polish organizations, the Polish Information Committee and the Polish Society of London, separately approached the home office and offered their assistance in determining which Poles could be trusted and therefore not interned. They wanted the authorities to recognize Polish nationality, to exempt those Poles considered trustworthy from internment, and to give their organizations the authority for the issuing of certificates of nationality to the exempted Poles. These manifestly unorthodox proposals were not well received by the home office officials who seemed to take an immediate dislike to the Polish organizations. Polish nationality could not be legally recognized nor could the government authorize the use of certificates of nationality which would constitute de facto recognition. Despite certain doubts as to the authority of these organizations to speak for the resident Poles, some concessions were

made. In reply to a question in the house of commons on September 10, 1914, the home secretary, Reginald McKenna, announced:

It is not at present possible in law to recognize "Polish nationality" as distinct from the nationality of the Sovereign State of which residents in the various parts of Poland are subjects. But in the administration of the Aliens Restriction Order, all possible consideration will be shown to those persons of Polish race who, though technically "alien enemies" are in fact friendly to this country. ²¹

The foreign office agreed with McKenna's pronouncement but emphasized, in a letter to the home office, that it was undesirable to give any further recognition to Polish nationality or to self-appointed organizations like the Polish Information Committee.²² The 'all possible consideration' mentioned by McKenna was left to the discretion of the commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Sir Edward Henry. A police memorandum written a year later on the Polish Information Committee recounted his action as follows:

It was then necessary for the Commissioner to obtain some assistance in dealing with the Poles under the A.R.O. Aliens Restriction Order and he consulted Mr. Wickham Steed foreign editor of the Times. He also consulted the Russian Embassy and the opinion of both was that the Polish Information Committee was the best body to deal with. ²³

It appears, from what happened later, that the Serbian ministry and the London Czech Committee also approached the police on behalf of the Austrian Serbs and Czechs. Since Wickham Steed had closer relations with the Czechs than with the Poles, it is possible that when consulted by the

²¹ The evidence on the initial relations between the Poles and the home office is in H.O. 45-10740-262173. Since many of the papers are missing and the information is on the file covers, individual papers are not cited.

²² Law to H.O., 9 Oct. 1914, H.O. 45-10740-262173.

²³ Memorandum on Polish Information Committee, 22 Dec. 1915, Mepol. 2-1635. H.W. Steed, Through Thirty Years, London 1924, vol.II, p.41.

police he also recommended special treatment for the Czechs. It is an interesting coincidence that Steed, an associate of R.W. Seton-Watson and an ardent campaigner for national self-determination, was consulted by the police. It is not surprising that the advice he gave was very favourable to the émigrés.

On October 30, 1914, the commissioner formulated a comprehensive policy for the treatment of enemy aliens friendly to the Entente. Enemy aliens approved by authorized organizations would be exempt from internment but not from the other regulations of the Aliens Restriction Order. The Serbian ministry, the Polish Information Committee, and the London Czech Committee were selected as the agencies to vouch for the Austrian Serbs, the Poles, and the Czechs respectively. While the Polish Information Committee had been approved by the Russian embassy, the London Czech Committee had no such sponsor. According to the commissioner:

There are strong reasons why this group should be treated with consideration. Unfortunately no Diplomatic guarantee is possible in this case, but Mr. Wickham Steed vouches implicitly for the honour and good faith of Mr. Kopecky [of the London Czech Committee] who is competent to answer for the names put forward. ²⁴

On November 3, 1914, the home office approved the police policy. ²⁵

It appears that similar provisions were not made at this time for the Yugoslavs, possibly because they were not as quick as the others in approaching the government. ²⁶

On the recommendation of the foreign office,

²⁴ Henry memorandum, 30 Oct. 1914, H.O. 45-10760-269116.

²⁵ Troup (H.O.) to Henry, 3 Nov. 1915, H.O. 45-10760-269116.

²⁶ Yugoslav refers to Habsburg subjects who supported the creation of a Yugoslav state. Citizens of the kingdom of Serbia are referred to as Serbians. The Serbian government supported the idea of a 'Greater Serbia' which meant merely the expansion of the Serbian kingdom. The Yugoslavs supported the idea of the creation of a federal Yugoslav state which might or might not include Serbia.

however, exemption from police detention was given to one Yugoslav, a Croat from Dalmatia, named Frano Supilo. George Clerk, a senior clerk in the war department of the foreign office, explained this request to Sir Basil Thomson of Scotland Yard by saying that Supilo might be valuable to the Allied cause.²⁷ Measures for the protection of other Yugoslavs were not, however, initiated at this time.

In December 1914, the home office and the war office gave permission to the representatives of the London Czech Committee to visit the internment camps to arrange for the release of friendly Czechs who had been interned before the policy of exemption had been implemented.²⁸ A similar request by the Polish Information Committee in January 1915 was refused by the war office.²⁹ The evidence, although meagre, suggests a pro-Czech, anti-Polish bias.

The home office and the police acted almost entirely alone in making these decisions. Foreign office approval was necessary because of the danger of international complications, but it had been given in a general sense on October 9, 1914, before the detailed policy had been formulated.³⁰ During November and December the foreign office seems to have known the general trend of home office policy without knowing the details.³¹ It was as late as January 12, 1915, that the home office, in response to an enquiry, informed the foreign office of the exact policy on the treatment of friendly alien enemies.³²

²⁷ Thomson to Hardinge, 27 Feb. 1917, F.O. 371-2862-52214.

²⁸ 'Home Office Circular to Chief Constables', 15 Dec. 1914, H.O. 45-10761-269578.

²⁹ Cubitt to Polish Information Committee, 24 Jan. 1915, Mepol. 2-1635.

³⁰ Law to H.O., 9 Oct. 1914, H.O. 45-10740-262173.

³¹ Grey to Spring Rice, 17 Nov. 1914, F.O. 115-1776-400.

³² H.O. to Nicolson, 12 Jan. 1915, H.O. 45-10761-269578.

The home office and the police had no interest in foreign policy and were not lenient because of humanitarian considerations. They were concerned with the magnitude of the alien problem and wanted to reduce the numbers interned. It was a problem of administration and security, not foreign policy. In the context of the whole war, the problem was trivial, but the policy was to have important repercussions. The decision not to intern all enemy aliens enabled the émigrés to move freely and work with a minimum of inconvenience. The campaign for national self-determination could not have been fought from an internment camp. The future relations between the government and the nationality organizations all rested on this initially unimportant policy adopted in October 1914 by men who had no connection with foreign policy. Their decisions made the campaign for national self-determination possible.

The foreign office had good reason to approve the home office policy on the treatment of aliens. While the home office was considering the problems of internment, the foreign office was being approached by émigrés representing the subject nationalities of eastern Europe, each with a programme for national liberation. The officials were well aware that these émigrés were too valuable to be interned.

The partition of Poland tended to unite Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary because they shared the desire to maintain the existing Polish settlement. In war, however, Poland could become a problem because each empire would be tempted to use the Poles against the others. The Russian government made the first attempt to win Polish support during the war when Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich, the commander-in-chief of the Russian army, issued a proclamation to the Poles on August 7, 1914, promising unity and autonomy as a result of the war. The proclamation had only

limited effect in Poland because many of the Poles would never be satisfied with autonomy and could never trust the Russian government.

The foreign office received the news with approval because of the prospect of Polish support and the possible advantages of a more satisfactory settlement of the Polish problem. According to Sir Eyre Crowe, an assistant under-secretary of state: 'There would however be real attraction to Poles in any scheme under which all the Polish nation was united and I consider the Russian proclamation a statesmanlike move in the right direction'.³³ The proclamation was also welcomed because of its propaganda value; on August 14, 1914, Grey approved a suggestion that it should be cabled in full to the American newspapers.³⁴

It was dangerous for the foreign office to give more than silent approval of the actions of the Russian government on a question which, regardless of other interpretations of international law, the Russians considered to be a matter of internal policy. The sensitivity of the Russian government on all matters related to Poland made the Polish problem one of the most dangerous political issues to confront the Entente during the war. If Poland was not an issue, the three empires might, as in 1914, come into conflict regardless of their mutual desire to maintain the Polish settlement. But, if their interests in Poland were threatened from the outside, there would be good reason for the three empires to sink their other differences and unite in defense of the status quo in Poland. It could be the germ of a separate peace between Russia and the Central powers if France or Britain even appeared to consider a solution to the

³³ Crowe minute, 14 Aug. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-39209.

³⁴ T. Healy to Grey, 16 Aug. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-39631.

Polish problem not entirely consistent with Russian interests. Since defeat of the Central powers without Russian support was impossible, the alliance with Russia was far more important than the welfare of the Poles. The British had good reason to adopt a policy consistent with and in support of Russian policy in Poland, but since the Russians considered it a matter of internal policy, that meant that Britain could have no Polish policy at all.

When Dr. Józef Rettinger, representing a committee of conservatives in Warsaw under the leadership of Count Zamoyski, asked the British government on August 31, 1914, to guarantee the Russian promises on Poland, the foreign office quite naturally reacted unfavourably. Rettinger was not particularly important in Polish politics but had the advantage, because he had numerous contacts in Britain, of being the first credible Polish politician to approach the foreign office.³⁵ Clerk, who interviewed him, replied to his request: 'that a guarantee to Poland from France and Great Britain of Russian sincerity was out of the question and that it was impossible for the two former countries to imply any doubt of the good faith of their ally'. But Clerk did not believe in discouraging the Poles:

I would however submit with all deference that it is well worth while to get Polish feeling wholeheartedly with us and that if an occasion offers itself of welcoming the measure announced by the Grand Duke Nicholas in a way which can be made known in Poland it would have an encouraging effect there and would make it morally difficult for Russia to evade her pledge.³⁶

³⁵ Interview with August Zaleski, president of the republic of Poland, 13 August 1969. A. Bennett, The Journals of Arnold Bennett, vol.II, 1911-1921, London 1952, p.102. Also see below, pp. 134-35. Rettinger had a long but mysterious career in Polish politics. Because he worked as an independent he was not in the future, despite his contacts, taken seriously by the government.

³⁶ Clerk minute, 31 Aug. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-46074.

Crowe disagreed, while Nicolson stated emphatically: 'We should leave this matter alone. I was asked to see this gentleman but declined to have anything to do with so foolish a matter.' They were probably thinking of the danger to the Entente in British involvement with the Poles, but they were overruled by Grey who wrote: 'I do not think he should be snubbed. Mr. Clerk might tell him that H.M. Govt. were in thorough sympathy with the Russian manifesto and that it was welcomed cordially by public feeling here'. Clerk followed Grey's instructions in a letter to Rettinger which he was later given permission to publish.³⁷ But not every Pole was as well received by the foreign office. The Polish Society of London and a group of Poles in the United States offered to form a legion to fight for the Entente but the war office, with the approval of the foreign office, rejected the idea.³⁸ The time had not yet come for the adoption of unorthodox methods of warfare. Even if the war office had been more daring, the Russian government would have never tolerated the formation of Polish units in the British army.

On behalf of the Polish Information Committee, the organization co-operating with the Metropolitan police, M.G. de Rosco-Bogdanowicz submitted a number of memoranda to the foreign office arguing in favour of the independence of Poland.³⁹ At the same time the foreign office was warned by Miss Laurence Alma-Tadema, an authoress and daughter of the

³⁷ Clerk to Rettinger, 4 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-46074. Clerk to Rettinger, 11 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-47287.

³⁸ Reichel to H.O., 27 Aug. 1914, Cubitt (W.O.) to Reichel, 3 Sept. 1914, H.O. 45-10740-262173. Spring Rice to Grey, 4 Nov. 1914, F.O. 115-1960-15.

³⁹ Rosco-Bogdanowicz memorandum, 19 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-50881.

painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, that Bogdanowicz was unreliable and should not be taken seriously.⁴⁰ Alma-Tadema was known to be well-acquainted with the Polish community in London and therefore spoke with some authority. The foreign office seemed to consider her reliable, probably because she was well-known and possibly because she appeared more respectable than a socialist like Bogdanowicz. Acting on Alma-Tadema's advice, the foreign office gave no encouragement to Bogdanowicz who, in any case, appears to have made a bad impression. The variety of Poles to approach the foreign office and the political disputes which split the Polish community caused Harold Nicolson, a member of the war department, to write:

It is characteristic of Polish politics that several self-styled representatives of Polish feeling have all produced different schemes as to the future of Poland. In this connexion I heard yesterday that M. Filipowicz who had been in correspondence with the F.O. has gone off his head and had to be placed in an asylum.⁴¹

The foreign office maintained contact with Poles like Rettinger who appeared to merit serious consideration while it discouraged others like Bogdanowicz. The feuding among the Poles made a bad impression and doubts remained as to the right of any of the émigrés to represent the Polish community. But contact had been established with the Polish émigrés which could serve as the basis for more complex relations. When Grey decided not to snub Rettinger, he was making a decision to maintain and foster contacts with the Poles. In spite of Russia, Britain was to have a Polish policy. In public, the government would always act with the greatest care not to upset the Russians by making statements on Poland

⁴⁰ Alma-Tadema to Arthur Nicolson, 8 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-47911.

⁴¹ Harold Nicolson minute, 12 Nov. 1914, F.O. 371-1900-69905.

inconsistent with Russian policy. In private, the government would act independently of the Russians in fostering contacts with the Polish émigrés. Since the Poles might be useful, the government was maximizing its alternatives by supporting Russian policy in appearance but not in reality. The future value of the Poles was not immediately obvious, but the transmitting of the Grand Duke's proclamation to the American newspapers indicates that the foreign office might have realized their potential value in propaganda.

The contact between the British exponents of national self-determination and the foreign office began sometime in September 1914 when Wickham Steed introduced Seton-Watson to George Clerk. Since the foreign office was involved in negotiations in the Balkans and interested in the potential conflict between Serbia and Italy in the Adriatic, Clerk asked Seton-Watson, as an expert, to write a memorandum on the South Slavs.⁴² Since there is no official record of the request, Clerk was probably acting on his own initiative. At about the same time G.M. Trevelyan, an authority on Italy and a supporter of national self-determination, recommended Seton-Watson as an expert on the South Slavs to Harold Nicolson.⁴³

In the memorandum, submitted October 2, 1914, Seton-Watson attacked both Austro-Hungarian rule over the South Slavs and Italian claims in Dalmatia. He stated that the best solution to the problems of this area of the Balkans would be the creation of a federal Yugoslav state consisting of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and the Slovene territories. According to his own interpretation, this

⁴² R.W. Seton-Watson, Masaryk in England, Cambridge 1943, p.39.

⁴³ Harold Nicolson minute, 20 Oct. 1914, F.O. 371-1905-55136.

programme was consistent with British policy:

The abstract principle already laid down by Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Churchill in their speeches since the outbreak of war - that in any settlement due regard must be shown for the principle of nationality - only requires to be translating [sic] into concrete facts. 44

On receiving the memorandum Clerk merely noted that Seton-Watson was an apostle of the Slavs, but Arthur Nicolson stated: 'Mr. Seton-Watson is one of the very few who comprehends the Southern Slav question, and his views should be treated with sound respect.' He added that on the basis of his own experience he agreed with Seton-Watson and concluded: 'When the terms of peace come to be discussed and the rearrangement of the Dual Monarchy's possessions has to be considered we should keep these remarks of Mr. Seton-Watson in mind!'

On the outbreak of war a number of Yugoslav politicians left the Habsburg monarchy to work for Yugoslav independence. They quickly realized that war presented the opportunity for which they had been waiting. Some of the émigrés went to Italy where they were watched by the ambassador in Rome, Sir Rennell Rodd, who kept the foreign office informed of their activities.⁴⁵ The most important émigré was Frano Supilo, a Croat from Dalmatia, who as a journalist and politician had fought for the Yugoslav cause. In October 1914 he arrived in Britain and by the special request of the foreign office was exempted from police detention.⁴⁶ In December Clerk asked him to submit his views to the foreign office in a memorandum and later, in his report, said of Supilo: 'He speaks with great and real

⁴⁴ Seton-Watson memorandum, 1 Oct. 1914, F.O. 371-1905-55136.

⁴⁵ Rodd to Grey, 29 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-1900-56371.

⁴⁶ Thomson to Hardinge, 27 Feb. 1917, F.O. 371-2862-52214. See above, p.27.

authority for the Yugo-Slavs, and the views he expressed call for serious consideration by H.M.G.⁴⁷

In the memorandum, submitted on January 12, 1915, Supilo gave a detailed account of conditions in the South Slav areas of Austria-Hungary and, rejecting Italian claims in Dalmatia as well as any form of Habsburg rule, proposed the creation of a Yugoslav state. He claimed that the value of a Yugoslav state would be in its ability to act as a barrier to German expansion towards the East.⁴⁸ This theory, which had some obvious appeal to the British, was to become a major theme in Yugoslav propaganda, especially after the publication in Germany of Friedrich Naumann's Mitteleuropa. The foreign office considered the memorandum important enough to have it printed for the cabinet.

Unfortunately, there are few records from this period of the government's reaction to the idea of a Yugoslav state. Arthur Nicolson undoubtedly agreed with Supilo as he had agreed with Seton-Watson.⁴⁹ Clerk pointed out the immediate value of the Yugoslavs when he wrote on the file:

The time is not yet come for a detailed consideration of these questions, - we have still to beat Germany - but their importance, particularly as regards Italian pretensions, is great, for here lies Serbia's real avenue to progress and the justification for the cession to Bulgaria which can alone secure for us united Balkan support.

⁴⁷ P.D. Ostović, The Truth About Yugoslavia, New York 1952, p.56, says that Supilo was introduced to the foreign office by Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed and that he also saw Asquith. There is no evidence in the Asquith papers or in the official documents of what transpired during the interview. Clerk minute, 31 Dec. 1914, F.O.371-1900-88470. Steed, Thirty Years, p.53.

⁴⁸ Supilo, 'Memorandum Respecting the Southern Slavs', 7 Jan. 1915, F.O. 371-2241-4404.

⁴⁹ Arthur Nicolson minute, 4 Oct. 1914, F.O. 371-1905-55136. See above, p.34.

The idea of a Yugoslav state might have had some appeal because of its own intrinsic merits. That appeal was strongly reinforced, as Clerk pointed out, by the fact that the Yugoslav programme might help to promote the negotiations in progress in the Balkans and particularly those to bring Bulgaria into the war on the Allied side. The Yugoslav areas could be used to compensate Serbia for concessions to Bulgaria. Clerk did not record his views on the future of Austria-Hungary, but Arthur Nicolson assumed that it would not survive the war.⁵⁰ Both Clerk and Nicolson accepted the Yugoslav programme, but that constituted nothing more than personal opinion and in no way reflected government policy. The government took heed of the Yugoslavs, but remained uncommitted. Arthur Nicolson accurately represented official opinion on the discussion of war aims when he wrote:

it is too early to discuss these problems, as I myself am convinced that this campaign will be a long one. It is no use our talking of terms of peace until we have brought Germany into the position when she will be forced to accept any terms that we may offer, and it will be a long time before we are able to bring her into that position.⁵¹

On November 5, 1914, Seton-Watson submitted to the foreign office a memorandum entitled 'The Future of Bohemia' which was based on conversations in Rotterdam with Thomas Masaryk, the leader of the Czech Realist party and soon to be the leader of the Czechoslovak émigré movement. The memorandum proposed the creation of a new state in central Europe consisting of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and the Slovak districts of Hungary.⁵² The

⁵⁰ Nicolson to Buchanan, 8 Jan. 1915, F.O. 800-377.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Seton-Watson, 'The Future of Bohemia', 5 Nov. 1914, F.O. 371-1900-67456.

idea must have seemed incredible in 1914 for Clerk was prompted to reassure the foreign office by writing on the file: 'Masaryk is a man of great weight among the Czechs, and the ideas here advanced are serious and worth bearing in mind'. It was too early even to comment on the subject, but at least Masaryk gave the foreign office something to ponder.

Like the home office, the foreign office seemed to show, from the very beginning, a preference for the Czechoslovaks and the Yugoslavs but not for the Poles. The explanation may be that the former were strongly supported by Wickham Steed, Seton-Watson and Trevelyan, while the latter had to act alone without the support of men respected by the officials. The Poles also made a bad impression by their attacks on one another, while the others seemed to act in perfect harmony. Indeed, the Czechoslovaks and the Yugoslavs worked together in Britain as they had done before 1914 within the Habsburg monarchy.⁵³ These preferences were to become more pronounced and more significant later.

⁵³ Masaryk was influential among the South Slavs before the war and had assisted Supilo in the Friedjung trial. Connections between the Czechs, Yugoslavs, and some of their English allies had been established before 1914 which explains the speed of development of the movement in Britain after the outbreak of war. V. Dedijer, The Road to Sarajevo, London 1966, p.179; R.W. Seton-Watson, Masaryk in England, London 1943, p.17. The Serbian Relief Fund, established in September 1914, brought together many who favoured national self-determination and gave them some form of organization. Wickham Steed also held weekly meetings, every Saturday afternoon, in which strategy was co-ordinated. These meetings were attended by the representatives of a number of eastern European nationalities. Early in 1915 the Czech National Committee and the Yugoslav Committee were formed and assumed the leadership of their respective nationalities while co-operating with each other. The details of these organizations and their activities can be found in Harry Hanak's Great Britain and Austria-Hungary during the First World War, London 1962, which is a thorough study of these two nationality organizations.

The war made the creation of Czechoslovak, Polish and Yugoslav states possible. The leaders of these nationalities were the first to realize the new possibilities presented by the war, and they immediately began to work for national independence. The government was too involved in the immediate problems created by the war to give any thought to many of the new alternatives in foreign policy. Official thought concentrated on issues in western not eastern Europe. The émigrés took the initiative in establishing contact with the government and began the process of informing it of the new alternatives in eastern Europe. The government responded with cautious interest and some encouragement. Although definitive evidence is lacking, the encouragement probably stemmed from the realization that the Poles would be useful in propaganda, while the Yugoslavs would be useful in the Balkan negotiations.

Chapter II

Yugoslavia in the Balkan Negotiations, 1914-1915

When the British government was approached by the émigrés, it accepted no commitments to national self-determination because there was no immediate advantage in adopting utopian programmes for the future of Europe. Commitments were avoided unless they were expedient. Since the government had no specific war aims in eastern Europe, it was not compelled to adopt strategy to produce specific results, but could use political issues to support military policy. During the Balkan negotiations, from August 1914 to December 1915, strategic necessity and the nationality principle influenced the formation of British policy. Since nationalism appeared to be the root of Balkan problems, the nationality principle represented to the British a political consideration for the future. Yet when the nationality principle came into conflict with strategic necessity, the latter determined policy.

The relations between the government and the Yugoslav émigrés developed within the context of the Balkan negotiations because they temporarily gave the Yugoslavs a position of importance. Those officials who were aware of the Yugoslavs showed a distinct preference for the creation of a Yugoslav state. Yet such a preference, while influencing policy, by itself was not enough to determine policy. When it was advantageous, the government did not hesitate to sacrifice Yugoslav aspirations. When the Yugoslav programme was consistent with British

Balkan policy, and when it presented valuable opportunities in the negotiations, it was supported by the government. The future of Austria-Hungary was never a serious consideration.

In August 1914, all of the Balkan states, except Serbia and Montenegro, remained neutral awaiting a suitable opportunity to take advantage of the hostilities. The overweening territorial ambitions of these states and their mutual hatred made the recently established status quo highly unstable. Serbia, Greece, and Rumania were on good terms because they shared the desire to retain the territories they had taken from Bulgaria in the second Balkan war. Bulgaria wanted revenge and the return of the lost territory. Serbia and Montenegro supported the Entente, Greece favoured the Entente, Rumania was neutral and Bulgaria was pro-Austrian. The belligerents saw in the Balkan neutrals potential allies and were willing to pay for their support. The neutrals were willing to be bought by the highest bidder.

The Entente hoped to create a Balkan league of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Rumania directed against the Central powers.¹ If the Balkan powers fought one another, there would be no advantage in their participation in the war. If, however, they formed a league, as they had against Turkey in 1912, their combined military strength might be enough to tip the balance in favour of the Entente.² In order to facilitate the formation of a league, the Allies were willing to offer enemy territory to the Balkan states.³ According to Churchill:

¹ Asquith to George V, 11 Aug. 1914, Cab 41-35-27.

² Grey to Bax-Ironside, 13 Aug. 1914, F.O. 371-1900-38875.

³ Asquith to Grey, 17 Jan. 1915, F.O. 800-100.

It is only by reclaiming from Austria territories which belong naturally to the Balkan races that the means can be provided to satisfy the legitimate needs and aspirations of all the Balkan states. Without taking Austrian territory, there is no way by which any Balkan state can expand except by internecine war.⁴

If a league was to be formed, Serbia, Greece, and possibly Rumania would have to make concessions to Bulgaria to compensate for the losses in the second Balkan war. The Entente offered enemy territory to Serbia and Greece as an inducement to make concessions to Bulgaria but, in the first months of the war, the policy met with no success.⁵ A possible alternative was to exert pressure on Greece and Serbia, but Grey refused to adopt such methods for fear of alienating them.⁶

By February 1915, a Balkan league was as unattainable as it had been in August 1914. Arthur Nicolson had the best explanation for the failure: 'these wavering Balkan states will not be influenced by promises or assurances but will be guided simply by the events of the war and by their estimate as to which combination is likely to be the winning one'⁷ Despite the lack of progress in the negotiations, the belief persisted that a Balkan league could be created. It was assumed by the British that if Balkan territory could be redistributed along national lines, thus eliminating the disputes between the Balkan states, a league could be formed. It was this assumption which prompted Grey to tell the

⁴ W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis, 1911-1914, London 1923, pp.486-7.

⁵ Bax-Ironside to Grey, 24 Aug. 1914, F.O. 371-1900-42748.

⁶ Grey minute, Nicolson to Grey, 23 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-1901-52127. Grey to Bertie, 17 Aug. 1914, F.O. 371-1900-40166. Grey to Buchanan, 3 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-1901-45931. Grey to Des Graz, 5 Feb. 1915, F.O. 371-2242-15388.

⁷ Nicolson minute, Buchanan to Grey, 4 Sept. 1914, F.O. 371-1901-46469.

Bulgarian minister: 'that I was as favourable to Bulgaria getting districts which were Bulgarian as I was to Serbia getting districts that were Serbian. I was in sympathy with the national aspirations of Bulgaria on national lines.'⁸ The foreign office saw in the Yugoslav programme a possible solution to Balkan problems because, if Serbia was offered the Yugoslav territories of Austria-Hungary, the Serbian government might be willing to give Macedonia to Bulgaria.⁹ Macedonia was a necessary part of either a Greater Serbia or a Greater Bulgaria but not of a Yugoslavia. Therefore, a Greater Bulgaria could not co-exist with a Greater Serbia, but could with a Yugoslavia. If the Serbian government would abandon the Greater Serbian programme in favour of the Yugoslav programme, the aspirations of both Serbia and Bulgaria could be satisfied and a league could be formed. During the negotiations, the British government, under the influence of the Yugoslavs, overestimated the strength in Serbia of the exponents of Yugoslavism. The flaw in the British approach to the Serbo-Bulgarian problem was that the Serbian government was never willing to abandon the Greater Serbian programme and therefore never willing to cede Macedonia to Bulgaria.¹⁰

On February 19, 1915, the British navy began the campaign against the Dardanelles. Following Nicolson's theory that diplomacy would be influenced by the course of the war, the campaign was undertaken, among

⁸ Grey to Bax-Ironside, 13 Feb. 1915, F.O. 371-2242-17234.

⁹ Clerk minute, Supilo, 'Memorandum Respecting the Southern Slavs', 7 Jan. 1915, F.O. 371-2247-4404.

¹⁰ T.J. Lederer, Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference, London 1963, pp.4-5. Ostović, Yugoslavia, p.58.

other reasons, in the hope that a serious military defeat of Turkey would induce Bulgaria to join the Entente.¹¹ On February 13, 1915, Grey wrote optimistically to Buchanan:

To reinforce my point that diplomacy in the Balkans must be co-ordinated with strategy; you might point out to M.F.A. that if our attack on Dardanelles opens well and makes progress next week it will much improve the opportunity for diplomatic steps at Sophia and elsewhere.¹²

The campaign seemed to have little influence on Bulgaria, but on March 4, 1915, the Italian government expressed its willingness to join the Entente in exchange for promises of rather large areas of the Habsburg monarchy. Among other things, the Italians wanted Dalmatia which was inhabited predominantly by South Slavs and coveted by the Serbians and the Yugoslavs. As a result of the work of Seton-Watson and Supilo the foreign office knew that Italian possession of Dalmatia would be a violation of the principle of nationality. It was for that reason considered the most objectionable of the Italian claims. A report from Buchanan in October 1914 that the Russian government would bitterly oppose Italian designs in Dalmatia prompted Arthur Nicolson to write:

Mr. Sazonov [Russian foreign minister] is quite right. Dalmatia is Slav and anxious to unite with Croatia-Slavonia and she would bitterly resent Italy attempting to incorporate her and we should have a South Slav question with Italy instead of with Austria.¹³

To agree to Italian demands and, thereby, to violate blatantly the principle of nationality in dealing with a people as nationalistic as the South Slavs could only be considered a most short-sighted policy

¹¹ Grey to Bertie, 11 Mar. 1915, F.O. 800-177.

¹² Grey to Buchanan, 13 Feb. 1915, F.O. 800-75.

¹³ Nicolson minute, Buchanan to Grey, 7 Oct. 1914, F.O. 371-2008-57095.

because, as Nicolson pointed out, it would inevitably create problems. But the foreign office had even more immediate reasons for opposing the Italian position. The Russian government would certainly oppose the Italian claim to Dalmatia, and the solidarity of the Entente necessitated at least some support for the Russian position. If a Balkan league was to be created by the application of the nationality principle and the transformation of a Serbian state into a Yugoslav state, the nationality principle could not be so openly violated by giving Yugoslav territory such as Dalmatia to Italy. It would hardly induce the Serbian government to make concessions to Bulgaria. It might also alienate the Yugoslavs and drive them to support Austria-Hungary against Italy. The Habsburg monarchy would be strengthened, and the Entente would lose potentially valuable allies. The foreign office was well aware of this danger, for Rodd had written that when he asked Supilo how the Southern Slavs would react to the war: 'Supilo replied if you come in the character of liberator the Slavs will fire in the air as they have been doing in action against the Russians, but if you come with annexationalist views they will fight you.'¹⁴

When the terms were first received by the foreign office, Clerk wrote: 'This, to my mind, is quite inadmissible. On the basis of nationality and local sentiment, there is no foundation for the Italian claim.'¹⁵ Arthur Nicolson agreed and warned Grey of the dangers involved in agreeing to the Italian demands.¹⁶ At first both Clerk and Nicolson hoped that

¹⁴ Rodd to Grey, 9 Dec. 1914, F.O. 800-65.

¹⁵ Clerk minute, 6 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-28275.

¹⁶ Nicolson to Grey, 9 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-29374. Nicolson to Grey, 22 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-34055. H. Nicolson, Peacemaking 1919, London 1933, p.160.

the Italians might be kept out of Dalmatia by being promised all of Istria.¹⁷ When this possibility failed, both tended to support the Russian opposition to the Italian demands. Clerk and Nicolson, who had both reacted favourably to the Yugoslav programme, were the two officials most directly involved in the Italian negotiations and, in so far as there was a foreign office opinion on the Italian designs in Dalmatia, they were its representatives. Grey agreed that the Italian demands were excessive, and on March 17, 1915, he wrote that the claim to Dalmatia:

leaves to Serbia very restricted opportunities and conditions for her outlet to the sea and it shuts in the Jugo-Slav provinces who have with reason looked to this war to secure for them the legitimate possibilities of expansion and development of which they have hitherto been deprived.¹⁸

A few days later he wrote to Buchanan that: 'The Prime Minister and some of my colleagues had discussed the Italian conditions yesterday and we had all felt that the Italian conditions left no real outlet for Serbia or the Jugo-Slavs.'¹⁹ Supilo seems to have influenced Grey, for he wrote of the Yugoslavs: 'National unity and commercial liberty and opportunity was what I would claim for them'.²⁰ Regardless of such sentiments, which may or may not have been sincere, Grey had absolutely no intention of opposing the Italian demands for the sake of the Yugoslavs or the Serbians. In October 1914, he had been informed that if Italy joined the Entente, Rumania would follow suit; the Rumanian intention was confirmed again

¹⁷ Clerk minute, Buchanan to Grey, 13 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-29374.

¹⁸ Grey to Rodd, 8 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-30446. Grey to Buchanan, 17 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-30931.

¹⁹ Grey to Buchanan, 20 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-32897.

²⁰ Grey to Buchanan, 25 Mar. 1915, Cab. 37-126-30.

on March 18, 1915.²¹ On March 4, 1915, he had written to Bertie that Italian participation might end the war. Grey was faced with a choice between two courses of action, both of which might create a Balkan league. He could continue the policy of using Dalmatia as an inducement to the Serbians in an attempt to create a Serbo-Bulgarian agreement which would lead to a Balkan league. Or, he could accept the Italian position, while risking the alienation of Serbia, in the hope that it would create a chain reaction in the Balkans in which Rumania, then Greece and finally Bulgaria would join the Entente.²² Serbo-Bulgarian relations gave little reason to think that the first course of action would be successful. On March 22, 1915, Grey clearly stated his position to Buchanan:

We must therefore decide either to admit the Italian claim or forgo the prospect of Italian co-operation. Italian co-operation will decide that of Roumania and probably some other neutral states. It will be the turning point of the war and will very greatly hasten a successful conclusion.²³

On March 24, 1915, Asquith wrote to the king: 'The importance of bringing in Italy without delay appeared to be so great that it was agreed to give a general consent to what she asks and to press on Russia to do the same ...'²⁴ During the negotiations Grey did not oppose the Russian government so openly as to damage the Entente, but neither would he support the Russian opposition to the Italian claims.²⁵ He sought a

²¹ Grey to Bertie, 1 Oct. 1914, F.O. 800-71. Barclay to Grey, 18 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2243-31886.

²² Grey to Bertie, 4 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2375-25017. Grey to Buchanan, 19 April 1915, F.O. 371-2508-46726.

²³ Grey to Buchanan, 22 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-34053.

²⁴ Asquith to George V, 29 Mar. 1915, Cab. 37-126-21.

²⁵ Grey to Buchanan, 27 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2507-35979.

compromise and applied pressure on either whenever it seemed necessary. Although the negotiations were protracted, a compromise was finally reached largely because of the efforts of the British government. The Italian claim to Dalmatia was accepted although, due to Russian opposition, slightly reduced. The treaty of London, signed on April 26, 1915, promised Italy northern Dalmatia, many of the Dalmatian islands, and other Habsburg territories like Cisalpine Tyrol, the Trentino and most of Istria. The British government played an important role in the negotiations and shared the responsibility for the final agreement. There can be no doubt that the policy of the government was based on immediate strategic considerations, while the future political repercussions of the treaty, although anticipated, were disregarded. On April 1, 1915, Grey had written to Rodd: 'The Allies have, in order to meet Italy, allowed serious inroad upon the principle of nationalities, for which they hope this war will secure general recognition.'²⁶

The negotiations were supposed to be secret, but on April 3, 1915, Sasonov disclosed the terms to Supilo. According to one account Supilo tricked Sasonov, but it is equally possible that Sasonov leaked the terms intentionally.²⁷ Since the negotiations were still in progress, he might have thought a leak would strengthen his position. His action, however, only served to embarrass the Entente and to produce unfortunate reactions among the Serbians and the Yugoslavs who were justifiably outraged by the Italian terms. Supilo informed Wickham Steed who, on April 14, 1915, wrote: 'My informant adds that the demands are being

²⁶ Grey to Rodd, 1 April 1915, Cab. 37-127-4.

²⁷ Lederer, Yugoslavia, p.11.

vigorously supported by our F.O. This I rather doubt, though I have not at the moment any definite information.'²⁸ The foreign office had been so receptive to Yugoslav ideas that the news seemed incredible.

Steed, Seton-Watson, Arthur Evans and the other supporters of the Yugoslavs immediately began to put pressure on the government to modify its policy. On April 23, 1915, the campaign began with a letter to The Times by Seton-Watson in which he vigorously attacked the Italian claim to Dalmatia as a violation of the principle of nationality. If Italy annexed Dalmatia:

In that event the entire population will offer a desperate resistance to the Italian invader, and Austria-Hungary, by representing the Entente Powers as the inspirers of an anti-Slav conspiracy will have one last chance of rallying her disaffected Southern Slav population. For Britain and France to yield on this question would not merely destroy for ever their prestige and influence in the Balkans, but it would also go a long way towards weakening the Entente.²⁹

Both Nicolson and Clerk are supposed to have seen the letter and approved of it before publication.³⁰ On April 24, 1915, Wickham Steed wrote: 'It may interest you to know that Seton-Watson's letter has the complete approval of some very high people in the F.O.'³¹ Again, on April 29, 1915, he wrote: 'I begin to understand George Clerk's remark to Seton-Watson on Monday that unless Italy comes in at once and turns the scale seriously against Austria and Germany, Grey, Delcassé and Sazonof will deserve to be hanged.'³²

²⁸ Steed to McClure, 14 April 1915, Steed to Robinson, 29 April 1915, Steed Mss.

²⁹ The Times, 23 April 1915.

³⁰ Interview with Hugh Seton-Watson. A.J. May, "Seton-Watson and the Treaty of London", Journal of Modern History, vol. XXIX, no. 1, pp. 42-48. May supplies the information on Nicolson but does not distinguish between Arthur and Harold both of whom were capable of such action.

³¹ Steed to McClure, 24 April 1915, Steed Mss.

³² Steed to Robinson, 29 April 1915, Steed Mss.

While there is not enough evidence to clarify Nicolson's role in this incident, or even to identify the Nicolson involved, Harold or Arthur, the information on Clerk is undoubtedly correct. Although Clerk favoured the nationalities, there is reason to believe that he was not entirely straightforward in his relations with Seton-Watson. On April 9, 1915, he wrote of the Yugoslav reaction to the negotiations: 'We wish the war to be ended as far as possible, on the basis of nationalities, certainly, but we did not set out on a Nationality Crusade.'³³ Seton-Watson wanted a Yugoslav state because of its own intrinsic merits. Clerk may have shared Seton-Watson's attitude, or he may have only supported the idea because it would assist the creation of a Balkan league. He may have exaggerated his support for the Yugoslavs when speaking to Seton-Watson in order to maintain contact with him regardless of the nature of government policy.

The campaign also involved appeals to those who might be able to influence the negotiations, like Count Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador, Walter Runciman, the president of the board of trade, Asquith and Grey.³⁴ It was, however, too late for the campaign to affect the negotiations with Italy. But the government could not entirely overlook the dissatisfaction manifested in the campaign because, if alienated, the Yugoslavs could be a great nuisance. The foreign office was warned by Rodd that attacks in the British press on Italian policy could seriously affect Anglo-Italian relations.³⁵ The Yugoslavs were useful as a source

³³ Clerk minute, Buchanan to Grey, 31 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2241-41098.

³⁴ David Davies to Seton-Watson, 3 May 1915, Seton-Watson Mss. IV. Evans to Grey, 27 April 1915, F.O. 371-2376-51706. Steed to Benckendorff, 25 April 1915, Steed Mss.

³⁵ Rodd to Grey, 28 April 1915, F.O. 371-2376-51340.

of information on the Balkans and, as Lord Eustace Percy, a member of the war department, pointed out in a memorandum on May 2, 1915, their allies, particularly Seton-Watson, were doing valuable work in combating the anti-war propaganda of the Independent Labour party and the Union of Democratic Control. Percy warned that it would be not only unfortunate but also dangerous to lose this support because the campaign against Italy might assume far greater proportions. He recommended that Seton-Watson should be taken into the confidence of the government on the assumption that he could be reconciled to government policy.³⁶ Possibly as a result of this memorandum, Grey wrote to Seton-Watson on May 3, 1915, and saw him on the following day.

Grey's reaction to the criticism from the supporters of the Yugoslavs might have been influenced by a guilty conscience for agreeing to accept terms which he knew would create future problems and for giving Italy Yugoslav territories while professing sympathy for their aspirations. No doubt he wanted to salvage as much as possible from the situation created by Sasonov's disclosure of the terms. He informed Seton-Watson that as a result of an Allied victory Serbia would receive the adjoining Slav territory under Austrian rule and wide access to the Adriatic in southern Dalmatia; the terms were not defined precisely but he added:

The greater part, at any rate, of the Slav districts will become free and enabled to settle their own destiny. Whether, for instance, Croatia remains an independent state or wishes to unite with other Slavs, we presume to be for her to decide. ³⁷

³⁶ Percy minute, 2 May 1915, F.O. 800-95.

³⁷ Grey to Seton-Watson, 3 May 1915, F.O. 800-112. According to Hugh Seton-Watson, Grey said the same in the interview as he had written in the letter.

He then pointed out that since the Slavs were going to gain so much, it was hardly fair of them to deny the Entente the means to achieve victory or to expect the complete satisfaction of their aspirations. As a result of Grey's efforts, Seton-Watson and his associates reluctantly accepted the need for Italian support. The attacks on the treaty diminished although, to the discomfort of the foreign office, they never entirely ceased. Grey's action enabled the relations between the government and the Yugoslavs to continue without impairment, but the price of reconciliation had been the recognition by Grey of the right of self-determination for the most important Yugoslav area, Croatia.

It was not enough to placate the Yugoslavs, for the Serbian minister also protested against the rumoured terms of the treaty of London and there were reports that there was so much dissatisfaction in Serbia that in some circles, particularly the army, a separate peace with Austria-Hungary was being considered.³⁸ To counter this difficulty, Grey sent a letter to Charles Des Graz, the minister in Belgrade, who on May 7, 1915, with the support of his French and Russian colleagues, delivered it to Nikola Pašić, the Serbian prime minister. After indicating that as a result of the successful conclusion of the war Serbia would receive Bosnia, Herzegovina, and wide access to the Adriatic, the letter went on to state: 'Whether the Federation of Croatia will follow will naturally be a matter to be decided by the Croats themselves.'³⁹ The letter seemed to have some pacifying effect on the Serbian government although

³⁸ Des Graz to Grey, 30 April 1915, F.O. 371-2257-52833.

³⁹ Des Graz to Grey, 2 May 1915, F.O. 371-2508-53085. Grey to Des Graz, 4 May 1915, F.O. 371-2257-53757. Des Graz to Grey, 7 May 1915, F.O. 371-2257-56420. Grey to Rodd, 31 July 1915, F.O. 371-2263-105071.

no mention was made of the fact that it did not represent any binding obligation on the part of the British government. Grey had acted on his own initiative without consulting the cabinet so that the letter represented, according to his own interpretation, only a personal, not official, obligation. It is doubtful whether anyone in the government, outside of the foreign office, ever knew of the letter which, overshadowed by later negotiations, was eventually forgotten. The letter was never considered by the government as representing an official commitment, but it did eventually have some embarrassing repercussions. Grey was not to escape the consequences of the deception or stupidity involved in confusing his official and private roles.

As Grey had hoped, the treaty of London led to negotiations with Rumania. But these negotiations showed that a chain-reaction among the Balkan states was not a simple process by which a Balkan league could be formed. On April 25, 1915, the Rumanian government signified its willingness to join the Entente in exchange for southern Bukovina, Transylvania and the Banat. If the Italians had large appetites, they were surpassed by the Rumanians whose claims, if accepted, would almost double the size of their country. The possible effect of these claims on Austria-Hungary prompted Arthur Nicolson to write:

We cannot blot Austria and Hungary out of the map and convert them into large Switzerlands with no access to the sea. Promises hastily made now for an immediate object will be most embarrassing to realize when peace terms come to be discussed. 40

The most annoying of the Rumanian claims was for the whole of the Banat, the south-west corner of which was inhabited by South Slavs and

⁴⁰ Nicolson minute, Barclay to Grey, 24 April 1915, F.O. 371-2244-49484.

bordered on the Danube just across the river from Belgrade. The Serbians naturally aspired to some of the Banat so that their capital would not be adjacent to the territory of a foreign power. The situation was almost exactly identical to the Italian negotiations with almost the same reasons for and against the acceptance of the proposed terms. But this time the foreign office was more aware of the possible Serbian reaction and more unwilling to face it.

The negotiations were conducted directly between St. Petersburg and Bucharest with the British government playing only a secondary role. Grey gave the Russians a free hand except for the stipulation that Serbian interests in the Banat must be safeguarded.⁴¹ He wrote concerning Serbia to Buchanan: 'I could not urge that she should agree to the handing over to someone else of people of Serbian nationality who were living at the very doors of her capital.'⁴² Since the Rumanians would not compromise, no progress was made in the negotiations through May and June. Grey continued to maintain his position:

I am of opinion that Allies must adhere to their attitude about the Banat. Serbian feeling is very excited and resentful over offer of Macedonia to Bulgaria, and very suspicious of what has been arranged as regards Adriatic coast with Italy. I think that it would be neither fair nor prudent to sacrifice Serbian interests in the Banat. ⁴³

But the Entente had gone so far in attempting to create a chain reaction in the Balkans that it could hardly stop now. On June 28, 1915, Clerk pointed out that 'if the advent of Rumania and Bulgaria really means the beginning of the end of the war, and still more if it

⁴¹ Grey to Buchanan, 10 May 1915, F.O. 371-2258-57127.

⁴² Grey to Buchanan, 20 May 1915, F.O. 371-2258-63946.

⁴³ Grey to Buchanan, 19 June 1915, F.O. 371-2259-80322.

means the difference between success and failure in the Dardanelles, then arguments in favour of sacrificing Greece and Serbia are very strong.⁴⁴ In the first week of July 1915 the Russian government, faced by Rumania's complete refusal to compromise, accepted the Rumanian terms with the approval of the British government.⁴⁵ Although the treaty was not signed until 1916, and Rumania did not enter the war until then, the terms had been settled in July 1915. The Rumanian negotiations were an exact parallel with the Italian negotiations in that politically regrettable terms were accepted for strategic reasons. Fortunately the negotiations remained secret.

At this time the government was still working to prevent friction between the Italians and the Yugoslavs. G.M. Trevelyan, the most pro-Italian of Seton-Watson's colleagues, was sent by the foreign office to Italy to work for an understanding between the Yugoslavs and the Italians.⁴⁶ On July 22, 1915, he wrote to Herbert Montgomery, as assistant clerk in the foreign office: 'I have therefore written to Seton-Watson (with whose views I entirely agree) that as a matter of tactics I think that he and Evans had better now let the subject rest awhile, in the interest of the object they have in view.'⁴⁷ Eric Drummond, Grey's private secretary, also attempted to stop attacks on Seton-Watson by A. Cippicio, an Italian lecturer at University College, London. The closeness of the relations between the government and the Yugoslavs was indicated by

⁴⁴ Clerk minute, 28 June 1915, F.O. 371-2245-85777.

⁴⁵ Crewe to Bertie, 7 July 1915, F.O. 371-2259-92014.

⁴⁶ Nicolson to Rodd, 9 June 1915, F.O. 371-2377-72816.

⁴⁷ Trevelyan to Montgomery, 22 July 1915, F.O. 371-2568-88450.

the decision of the home office, with the approval of the foreign office, to give the Yugoslavs similar rights of exemption from internment as those enjoyed by the Czechs and the Poles.⁴⁸ The Yugoslav Committee was not given quite the same status as the London Czech Committee and the Polish Information Committee because instead of operating independently it was expected to work through the Serbian ministry. While it can be shown that the Yugoslavs were in constant contact with the foreign office throughout this period, it is difficult to determine the degree of their influence.

The Rumanian refusal to join the Entente in 1915 ended the possibility, which had inspired the negotiations, that a Balkan league could be formed by a chain reaction among the Balkan states precipitated by the Italian declaration of war. The Entente therefore reverted to the earlier policy of seeking a Serbo-Bulgarian agreement in which Serbia would cede to Bulgaria, in exchange for support, that part of Macedonia termed the uncontested zone in the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of 1912. In August 1915, in an attempt to open negotiations, the four powers of the Entente offered to guarantee in precise terms the territories the Serbians could expect as a result of the war on condition that the proper concessions were made to Bulgaria. The negotiations which preceded the offer to Serbia were long and protracted because it was almost impossible to find a formula both appealing to the Serbians and acceptable to the four powers of the Entente. The conflict centred on Croatia and Slavonia which the Russians wanted to promise to Serbia. The Italians objected because they were

⁴⁸ Nicolson to Seton-Watson, 28 July 1915, Seton-Watson Mes. VIII.
Waller to Bigham, 10 April 1917, H.O. 45-10831-326555.

reluctant to see a large Slav state created on the Adriatic.⁴⁹

The British government, primarily concerned to achieve agreement on a note which would be a real incentive to the Serbians to abandon their intransigence towards Bulgaria, as usual acted as a mediator between Italy and Russia. In the negotiations the foreign office tended to favour a solution equivalent to the creation of a Yugoslav state because the only possible compensation for the Serbian loss of Macedonia was in the Yugoslav areas of the Habsburg monarchy. In the negotiations Grey suggested that Serbia should be promised Slavonia and a guarantee to facilitate a union with Croatia, subject to the wishes of the Croats.⁵⁰ The refusal of the Italian foreign minister to accept these proposals created some embarrassment, for as Percy pointed out: 'We have already pledged ourselves to the "freedom of Croatia" - at least by inference.'⁵¹ Grey was forced to waive his proposals because of the Italian objections, but since the note had to mention Croatia and Slavonia in some form, the following clauses were adopted: 'If the future of Slavonia is in the hands of the Allies at the end of the war, it shall be assigned to Serbia.... The future of Croatia ... is reserved without prejudice to be decided at the final peace.'⁵² The note, as it was finally presented to the Serbian government, also promised to Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina,

⁴⁹ Rodd to Grey, 3 July 1915, F.O. 371-2259-88943. Buchanan to Grey, 9 July 1915, F.O. 371-2259-92586.

⁵⁰ Grey to Rodd, 31 July 1915, F.O. 371-2263-105071.

⁵¹ Percy minute, Rodd to Grey, 2 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2263-105450.

⁵² Grey to Rodd, 5 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2263-106337. Buchanan to Grey, 9 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2265-109489. Grey to Des Graz, 10 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2265-109491. Rodd to Grey, 11 Aug. 1915, Grey to Bertie, 12 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2265-111103.

and wide access to the Adriatic in southern Dalmatia in precise geographical terms.⁵³

In May, Russia, France and Britain had promised that in the event of victory Serbia would receive Bosnia, Herzegovina and wide access to the Adriatic, while Croatia would have self-determination. The four power note of August might appeal to the Serbians because, for the first time, the areas were defined in precise geographical terms and because Slavonia was mentioned. But the reference to Croatia in the later note constituted less than had been said in May. The note of August also stated that these guarantees were subject to Serbian concessions to Bulgaria in Macedonia; a condition never previously mentioned. The Serbian government would, therefore, have been quite justified in thinking that the Entente was now offering less at a far higher price. By making unofficial promises Grey had manoeuvred himself into a ridiculous position. The note failed to convince the Serbian government to make the desired concessions to Bulgaria.

These negotiations show that Italy was beginning to assume in Anglo-Yugoslav relations the position of Russia in Anglo-Polish relations. It was a role that the Italians were to play for the rest of the war. The Italian opposition to the creation of a Yugoslav state made it impossible for Britain to openly espouse the Yugoslav cause. It even made Anglo-Yugoslav relations difficult because the foreign office had to discourage the public activities of the Yugoslavs to avoid annoying the Italians. Austria-Hungary was never as great an obstacle to Anglo-Yugoslav relations.

The Italian attitude was a source of great annoyance to the foreign

⁵³ Des Graz to Grey, 15 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2265-112986.

office which obviously preferred the Yugoslavs, if only because the Italians were a much greater nuisance. No sooner had Italy joined the Entente than it began to make negotiations in the Balkans impossible.

Drummond echoed foreign office opinion when he wrote to Grey:

I do not think that the Italian policy as regards Croatia and Slavonia is altogether to be trusted and I feel that we ought not to identify ourselves with it. Monsieur Supilo thinks that Italy does not wish to see Croatia and Slavonia Servian or federated with Servia which I am convinced it is our interest to encourage. ⁵⁴

The foreign office might have preferred the Yugoslavs, but it considered the Italians more important in the conduct of the war. Whenever there was a conflict of interests between the Italians and the Yugoslavs, the government supported the Italians. Yet regardless of the Italian government, relations between the Yugoslavs and the government continued. A report on August 30, 1915, from Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the ambassador in Washington, that the Yugoslav organizations in the United States were assisting the Entente by working against German-inspired strikes in munitions factories supplying the Allies, substantiated the view that the Yugoslavs were too valuable to be alienated unnecessarily.⁵⁵ The foreign office even gave facilities to a Yugoslav agent to recruit for the Serbian army in the South American Yugoslav settlements.⁵⁶ On behalf of the Yugoslavs in London, Seton-Watson offered to supply the war office with information regularly smuggled out of the Central powers.⁵⁷ The émigrés had their own courier system which enabled them to maintain contact with their compatriots in Habsburg territory. The offer was

⁵⁴ Drummond to Grey, 14 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2268-112839.

⁵⁵ Spring-Rice to Grey, 30 Aug. 1915, F.O. 115-1856-39.

⁵⁶ Percy minute, 16 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2264-113137.

⁵⁷ Percy minute, 26 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2241-115057.

readily accepted and the information was, in future, channelled through the British authorities in Switzerland.⁵⁸ These incidents, while not necessarily important in themselves, indicate the willingness of the Yugoslavs to work for the Entente and the confidence placed in them by the foreign office.

On August 30, 1915, Grey told Supilo that he was willing, if the Serbian government agreed, to promise self-determination to Bosnia, Herzegovina, southern Dalmatia, Slavonia and Croatia in the event of the successful conclusion of the war.⁵⁹ Grey's proposals on these areas in the previous negotiations, if carried out, would have created a Yugoslav state unappealing to many of the Yugoslavs because it would have been, in essence, merely an enlarged kingdom of Serbia. This latest proposal made to Supilo, and undoubtedly inspired by him, was a more truly Yugoslav solution since it would give the Yugoslavs the power to negotiate a union with Serbia instead of being merely absorbed by it. The offer, however, was vetoed by the Serbian government which was more interested in a Greater Serbia than in a Yugoslavia.⁶⁰

Throughout the Balkan negotiations, in all of his references to Croatia, Grey insisted that its future must be determined by the Croats themselves. It was an indication of the influence of the Yugoslavs because they were the only possible source of the idea; it would never have come from Italy, Serbia or Russia. The only possible explanation for his insistence upon such an idea was either his belief in the Yugoslav programme or his desire to please the émigrés. Although the Yugoslavs

⁵⁸ Seton-Watson to Clerk, 26 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2591-121585. See below, p.71.

⁵⁹ Clerk minute, 30 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2258-123158.

⁶⁰ Des Graz to Grey, 5 Sept. 1915, F.O. 371-2258-125871.

were in constant contact with many of the foreign office officials, it is impossible to determine, in most cases, the degree of their influence because the necessary connections in the transference of ideas cannot be established. Grey's references to Croatia, and the general preference of the foreign office for the Yugoslavs, are at least indications that their influence was significant.

On September 1, 1915, Serbia accepted in principle the cession of the uncontested zone to Bulgaria, thus appearing to fulfill the conditions stated in the four power note.⁶¹ On August 7, 1915, Grey had agreed that while the uncontested zone must be ceded its borders could be modified.⁶² The Serbians used this loop-hole to propose so many modifications as to make the cession unacceptable to Bulgaria. It could be argued, depending on the interpretation of the four power note, that despite the modifications the Entente was committed to fulfill its promises to Serbia since the Serbians had agreed to cede the uncontested zone. According to the Entente, however, the Serbian response was unsatisfactory, and therefore the guarantees proposed in August did not become commitments. Grey's promises in May, overshadowed by the offer in August, had been forgotten.

In October 1915 Bulgaria joined the Austro-German campaign against Serbia which, being attacked both in the north and east, quickly collapsed. The Balkan negotiations were over and the Serbian value to the Entente extremely reduced. The failure of the negotiations was blamed on Serbia for its unwillingness to negotiate an agreement with Bulgaria. On November 29, 1915, Drummond wrote:

⁶¹ Des Graz to Grey, 1 Sept. 1915, F.O. 371-2265-123653.

⁶² Grey to Des Graz, 7 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2263-107472.

Sir Edward asks me however to point out that it was not Russia but Serbia who was so slow in responding to our proposals. We feel here that if Serbia had been really willing to assent to the cessions of territory which we urged, Bulgaria would certainly have not gone to war and would probably have come out on our side.⁶³

Serbia was the scapegoat because the government would not recognize its own miscalculations. It had believed that an equitable division of the Balkans on national lines would lead to the creation of a Balkan league. Grey wrote: 'Our general desire is that redistributions of territory should be according to nationality of inhabitants.'⁶⁴ Bulgaria was not interested in an equitable division but rather in the highest price, and the Central powers could always outbid the Entente. If the Central powers had been losing the war or if Turkey had been defeated at the Dardanelles, Bulgaria might have settled for a lower price and joined the Entente. But, as it was, Bulgaria accepted the highest bid, and the expectation that she might have acted otherwise was merely wishful thinking. In December 1915 the French government suggested a guarantee to Serbia of its territorial integrity and of its expected gains as a result of the war. The suggestion was rejected by the British government.⁶⁵ Since a Balkan league was no longer possible, such promises were unnecessary.

During 1915 the government had promised, or had been willing to promise, vast areas of Austria-Hungary to Italy, Serbia and Rumania. Although it might well be assumed that at some time a decision had been made to destroy the Habsburg monarchy, in fact the issue was never seriously considered and the decision was never made. While Habsburg territory was promised because it was necessary in order to create a

⁶³ Drummond to Lord Grey, 29 Nov. 1915, F.O. 800-95.

⁶⁴ Grey to Barclay, 12 April 1915, F.O. 371-2244-41741.

⁶⁵ Grey to Bertie, 30 Dec. 1915, F.O. 371-2281-200194.

Balkan league, little thought was given to the repercussions of these promises. In December 1914 the government expressed interest in a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. But when the possibility actually arose and it became a choice between a separate peace and a Balkan league, the government chose the latter.⁶⁶ The decision was not to destroy the Habsburg monarchy but just to give it no special consideration.

On March 30, 1915, Drummond, in reference to public comments on the breakup of the Habsburg monarchy made by J.D. Gregory, an assistant clerk, expressed the official indifference or indecision on the future of Austria-Hungary when he wrote:

I will send Gregory a warning that he must be extremely careful about discussing these very big questions, all the more so as I believe Sir Edward is of opinion that things are not sufficiently advanced to enable him to take any definite line as regards Austrian eventuality.⁶⁷

There was never any consideration given to the idea of making sacrifices in order to preserve the Empire. Indeed, there seemed to exist a willingness, although not a desire, to destroy the monarchy. Few seemed to be aware of the ultimate effect of the war on Austria-Hungary, and it is possible that many assumed that the Empire would continue to exist regardless of territorial losses. Arthur Nicolson was alone in expressing the significance of the promises of Habsburg territory. On July 21, 1915, he wrote: 'At the same time I cannot disguise the fact that the concessions which we offered to her, and which comprise practically one half of Hungary, cannot be realized until we have actually pulverized Hungary and Austria.'⁶⁸

To fulfill the promises, even to Italy alone,

⁶⁶ Grey to Buchanan, 29 Dec. 1915, F.O. 371-1904-86748. Grey to Bertie, 19 Jan. 1915, F.O. 371-2505-7101.

⁶⁷ Drummond to Bertie, 30 Mar. 1915, F.O. 800-181.

⁶⁸ Nicolson to Hardinge, 21 July 1915, Hardinge Mss. 95-65a.

the Empire indeed had to be 'pulverized'. It was extremely doubtful that the monarchy could survive such losses or the defeat necessary before such losses would be accepted. The treaty of London was eventually to prove an insurmountable barrier to a separate peace with the Empire because the Habsburgs would never accept the treaty, Italy would never accept less than the treaty, and the Entente would fulfill its obligations. The monarchy was, in a sense, doomed by the treaty of London. It is ironic that to the Yugoslavs and their supporters the treaty of London was one of the most iniquitous acts of the British government. Yet beyond any doubt, the acceptance of the treaty did more than any other single act of the government to destroy the monarchy and to ensure the creation of a Yugoslav state. In essence, the British were indifferent to the future of the Habsburg monarchy. They might not desire its destruction, but they would not alter strategy to preserve it.

The Balkan negotiations gave the Yugoslavs a position of far greater importance in British policy than that possessed by the Poles or the Czechoslovaks. The official preference for the Yugoslavs was strengthened by the possibility that the Yugoslav programme might facilitate the creation of a Balkan league. After 1915 the Balkans ceased to be an area of primary importance and, therefore, while the relations with the Yugoslavs continued, they lost much of their significance. The preference for the Yugoslavs continued, but when it was no longer allied to the self-interest involved in the creation of a Balkan league, promises to the Yugoslavs were no longer considered. When the French government suggested guarantees to Serbia in December 1915, Percy, a sympathizer with the nationalities, stated: 'we all know perfectly well that we cannot and

will not continue this war until Jugo-Slavia is constituted.⁶⁹

When the Central powers launched their attack on Serbia in October 1915, Seton-Watson and Ronald Burrows, the principal of King's College, The Strand, tried unsuccessfully to convince the government to deploy large military forces in the Balkans to prevent the Serbian collapse.⁷⁰ Seton-Watson could accept the treaty of London, but not the failure of the government to help Serbia. In December 1915, he wrote an article, "The Failure of Sir Edward Grey", in which he attacked Grey's Balkan policy and his handling of the negotiations.⁷¹ The publication of the article in February 1916 considerably weakened his influence in the foreign office although his relations with many of the officials continued.

During 1915 little conflict existed between the war office and the foreign office although the potential for conflict was inherent in the situation. The explanation lies, to some extent, in the attitude of the foreign office. It was generally assumed, particularly by Grey and Nicolson, that diplomacy in war would achieve nothing unless it was supported by favourable military action. In practice, this assumption led to the adjustment of diplomacy to strategy. Foreign policy was therefore determined not by long-term political considerations, but by immediate strategic necessity. The foreign office, by its own will, subjected policy to military considerations and therefore provoked no conflict with the war office. According to Percy: 'Sir Edward Grey tended to make a virtue of this necessity by his dictum that, in war, a

⁶⁹ Percy minute, Grey to Bertie, 30 Dec. 1915, F.O. 371-2281-200194.

⁷⁰ Burrows to Bonar Law, 29 Oct. 1915, Bonar Law Ms. 51-4-33.

⁷¹ R.W. Seton-Watson, 'The Failure of Sir Edward Grey', English Review, Feb. 1916, p.135.

Foreign Secretary could have no policy but to do what the soldiers wanted.⁷²

Grey's policy had merit particularly when victory was uncertain, but its justification is insufficient to explain its adoption. During the first year of the war, the foreign office began to disintegrate. In December 1914 Eyre Crowe was transferred to the contraband department because he supposedly lost his head and was insubordinate to Grey.⁷³ In the spring of 1915 Sir William Tyrrell, Grey's private secretary, suffered a serious breakdown as a result of the death of his son and was replaced by Drummond.⁷⁴ Arthur Nicolson, never a very capable administrator, seems to have been unable to adjust to the war and the changes in diplomacy. Although still capable of excellent advice, he seems to have suffered a loss of faith.⁷⁵ Runciman wrote in February 1915: 'Grey nearly broke under the strain [August 1914] but is now well again, although greatly aged.'⁷⁶ In October 1915 Bertie observed that Grey was no longer capable of making any virile decision.⁷⁷ Grey seems to have been going through the same process as Nicolson, made worse by his growing blindness and feelings of guilt over the outbreak of war. Possibly his willingness to tailor policy to strategy resulted from a disillusionment with diplomacy because of its failure to prevent war. Such a reaction would be reasonable in a period when the major issues

⁷² E. Percy, Some Memories, London 1958, p.42.

⁷³ Bertie diary, 19 Dec. 1914, F.O. 800-163-FO 14-1.

⁷⁴ Chirol to Hardinge, 28 April 1915, Hardinge Mss. 93-388.

⁷⁵ H. Nicolson, A Study in Old Diplomacy, London 1930, p.427.

⁷⁶ Runciman to Robert Chalmers, 7 Feb. 1915, Runciman Mss.

⁷⁷ Bertie diary, 24 Oct. 1915, F.O. 800-167. The best study of the foreign office during this period and particularly of Grey's reaction to the war is M.G. Ekstein-Frankel, 'The Development of British War Aims, August 1914-March 1915', London Ph.D. 1969.

were being settled by force. The disintegration of the foreign office probably explains, in part, its unwillingness to accept a dominant role in the making of policy and its willingness to submerge political considerations for the sake of strategy. The foreign office abdicated its dominant role in foreign policy and fatalistically accepted the course of events as they arose without trying to impose its own will upon them.

Chapter III

Espionage and Propaganda, 1914-1916

Since the initial relations between the government and the nationality organizations were established by the émigrés, the government responded on the merits of each particular case without reference to any clearly defined comprehensive policy for the treatment of the enemies' subject nationalities. The officials were quick, however, to realize that the disgruntled émigrés were potential weapons of war. But the Entente also possessed subject nationalities, and the Central powers came to the same conclusion. Since the use of subject nationalities as weapons of war began gradually, almost imperceptibly, it is difficult to determine which belligerent acted first. The British may have begun the process, but throughout the war they acted as if they were merely responding to German initiatives. The British government was at liberty to accept or reject the use of the émigrés in unorthodox warfare against the Central powers, but once it was clear that the enemy intended to use subject nationalities against the Entente, the government had little choice but to retaliate in a similar fashion or accept the unfortunate consequences of enemy policy. Circumstances seemed to compel the government to use the nationalities. This unorthodox type of warfare was not new; nevertheless, it was a symptom of the development of total war.

The Germans used the Indian and Irish nationalists while the British used the Yugoslavs and the Czechoslovaks. The Poles, however, were

unique in that their national cause was not necessarily committed to either the Entente or the Central powers. The belligerents were able to use the Poles but, in contrast to their relations with the other nationalities, also had to compete for Polish support. During 1915 and 1916 the use of the subject nationalities by the belligerents and the competition for Polish support was concentrated in the United States as part of the Anglo-German rivalry for American support. But, before discussing this rivalry in the context of Anglo-American relations, it is necessary to examine the type of assistance offered by the émigrés and its relationship to the administration of the British government.

Co-operation between the government and some of the nationality organizations developed shortly after the outbreak of war. While no agreement existed on ultimate aims, the desire for the defeat of the Central powers constituted a common basis for co-operation. Agreement on this one aim was reinforced by the immediate advantages of co-operation for both the officials and the émigrés. It has already been pointed out that the nationality organizations assisted the government on the question of the treatment of enemy aliens and that the Yugoslavs supplied the government with information on conditions in the Balkans and the Habsburg empire during 1915.¹ These specific examples represent only a small and relatively unimportant part of the co-operation primarily in espionage and propaganda which developed between 1914 and 1916. The role of the government in this co-operation was purely opportunistic and unrelated to the question of war aims. The officials were perfectly willing to accept assistance from nationalities for which the government planned to

¹ See above, pp. 24-28, 55, 58-59.

do nothing at the peace conference. The assistance accepted by the government was offered unconditionally and promises about the future of eastern Europe were not given in exchange.

The government was able to avoid commitments but not, ultimately, the consequences of its own action. As the émigrés had anticipated, the assistance tended to create among British officials a feeling of indebtedness to the nationalities. Those émigrés who assisted the government were able to prove both their political ability and their dedication to the Entente, thereby winning the respect and even the admiration of the officials. While numerous representations were made to the foreign office during this period on behalf of national self-determination in eastern Europe, relations between the government and the nationalities were dominated by the experience of practical co-operation which had far more effect on official attitudes than any number of memoranda. The co-operation tended to convert those officials involved into supporters of national self-determination and they, in turn, were in a position to influence policy. Official assistance to the nationality organizations also contributed to their campaign for national liberation. The use of the subject nationalities against the enemy and the competition for their support focused public attention on national self-determination. Eventually the campaign began to have some effect and it produced results which could not be overlooked in the formulation of British policy. Thus the government contributed to the creation of conditions which were to limit future British alternatives.

An analysis of the degree of co-operation which developed is severely limited by the lack of evidence. The co-operation existed primarily in propaganda and espionage - two fields of government activity in which

little documentation survives. After the war the records of the propaganda agency of the British government were destroyed.² Some relevant documents survived in the records of other ministries, but they represent only a fraction of the original material and, because they relate only to incidents involving other ministries, do not accurately represent the activities of the propaganda agency. The destroyed records presumably related to the daily operations and detailed activities of that agency which can now only be reconstructed with great difficulty. There are, therefore, many unanswerable questions about British propaganda. While it is possible to show that the agency had close relations with certain nationality organizations, the details of those relations can never be adequately determined. The study of espionage is even more difficult. No documents on the subject should exist because the intelligence agencies commit little to paper and destroy as much documentation of their activities as possible. During the war the foreign office sought to keep all reference to the secret service out of its records, and when such references appear, they are often so circumspect as to be almost meaningless.³ Fortunately some documents have survived, and on that basis some discussion of the role of the nationalities in British espionage is possible. Due to the scarcity of documents on both propaganda and espionage, all that is possible is a minimum estimate of the degree of co-operation. It may only be the tip of the iceberg.

The most obvious type of assistance given by the émigrés was in the supply of information. From the very beginning of their relationship

² Inf. 4-1a. This file contains correspondence on the disposal of the records on propaganda.

³ Nicolson to Bertie, 4 Feb. 1916, F.O. 800-190.

with the government, the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks followed a policy of passing on any useful information collected by their organizations. In order to maintain contact with their compatriots in Austria-Hungary, these émigrés established, early in the war, a courier system through Switzerland.⁴ The system supplied a flow of information on internal conditions within the Central powers until the Austrians, late in 1915, established tighter security along the Swiss frontier. During the spring of 1915 the émigrés sent this information, which was not easily accessible to British intelligence, directly to the foreign office.⁵ In August 1915, as a result of a suggestion by Seton-Watson, a regular system was established by which the information could be passed directly to the British intelligence authorities in Switzerland.⁶

The émigrés were also a source of information on developments in the United States. While the British had no difficulty in acquiring information about developments in the mainstream of American politics, the collection of information about the activities of the various national minorities was much more difficult because they tended to form closed communities. Through their compatriots in the United States the émigrés had access to this type of information which they supplied to the officials.⁷

⁴ E. Beneš, My War Memoirs, London 1928, p.74. Steed, Thirty Years, p.129.

⁵ Clerk minute, 1 July 1915, F.O. 371-2510-87436. Masaryk to F.O., 20 July 1915, F.O. 371-2241-98084. Rodd to Grey, 25 Dec. 1914, F.O. 371-2241-216.

⁶ Grey to Callwell and Hall, 19 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2241-115057. Beneš, Memoirs, p.74. Seton-Watson, Masaryk, p.77.

⁷ Seton-Watson to F.O., 10 May 1916, Cab. 37-147-22. Forman to F.O., 10 Jan. 1917, F.O. 395-138-8297. Namier to Butler, 9 March 1917, F.O. 395-108-51960. Stanmore to Seton-Watson, 22 July 1916, Seton-Watson Mss. IV.

Such information often related to propaganda or censorship as, for example, a list forwarded by Seton-Watson in August 1915 on behalf of the Yugoslavs containing the names of a number of American Slavic language newspapers which opposed the Entente. The list enabled the government to ban the circulation of these newspapers in British territory and to warn British firms to cease advertising in them.⁸

Once the émigrés had proven their reliability, the officials began to seek their assistance. On one occasion Clerk asked Seton-Watson to arrange for the translation from Czech of letters intercepted by the government.⁹ When approached by hitherto unknown émigrés, the foreign office often checked their bona fides with the known and reliable émigrés, like those on the London Czech Committee. Since the foreign office tended to follow their recommendations, the established émigrés acquired the power to eliminate competition by merely advising the foreign office to have no relations with their political opponents.¹⁰ Such incidents were of little importance in themselves, but they were symptoms of the growing confidence of the officials in the émigrés. If the total of all of the information supplied by the émigrés during the war could be calculated, it might prove to be of considerable importance.

In August 1914, a number of Czechs in New York, unconnected with Masaryk but with similar aims, formed an organization later designated as the Bohemian National Alliance.¹¹ This organization, which was to

⁸ Seton-Watson to Clerk, 26 August 1915, Clerk to Seton-Watson, 6 Sept. 1915, F.O. 371-2591-121585.

⁹ Clerk to Seton-Watson, 24 Sept. 1915, F.O. 371-2241-134164.

¹⁰ Drummond minute, 12 June 1916, F.O. 800-96.

¹¹ Beneš, Memoirs, p.98.

become a major source of funds for the Czechoslovak movement, contacted Masaryk and accepted his political leadership through Emmanuel Voska, Masaryk's agent in America. Voska became the head of the section of the Bohemian National Alliance for propaganda in the eastern United States.¹² Through Michael Pupin, a professor at Columbia University and the Serbian consul general in the United States, and Madame Slavko Grouić, the wife of the Serbian chargé d'affaires in London, Voska met Captain Sir Guy Gaunt, the naval attaché in Washington and the head of British naval intelligence in the United States.¹³ The date of this meeting is uncertain, but from Voska's account it appears to have been not later than June 1915. Since Gaunt was trying to establish an intelligence organization in the United States, he readily accepted Voska's offer of the services of his organization to British naval intelligence. Voska was inspired by the thought that: 'we must make ourselves so useful that when Britain and France dictated peace they could not deny our claim to an independent republic.'¹⁴ Czech agents could be of inestimable value to Gaunt because as American or Austrian citizens they could work in the United States, particularly against the Austrians, with greater

¹² T. Capek, The Čechs in America, New York 1920, p.270.

¹³ E. Voska, Spy and Counter-Spy, London 1941, p.29. V. Dedijer, The Road to Sarajevo, London 1967, p.275. Madame Grouić was in the United States working on Serbian Relief. Steed, Thirty Years, pp.43-46. Steed claims that he arranged for Voska to meet Gaunt.

¹⁴ Voska, Spy, p.20.

effectiveness than a British agent.¹⁵ If their activities were exposed, it would be difficult to prove that they were working for the British government.

These agents cannot be considered merely 'reliable sources' who occasionally contributed information to Gaunt. They were, in effect, agents working for the British government. Documentary evidence on this subject is rare, but the files of the British embassy in Washington for February 1917 show that like other British agents they had code numbers for identification.¹⁶ According to Voska, his organization initially worked without financial support from the British government because his agents worked without salary. In 1916, however, arrangements were made to supply his operating expenses from secret service funds.¹⁷ Masaryk later claimed that he made these arrangements in London because the Bohemian National Alliance lacked the funds to support Voska's work.¹⁸ This testimony is to some degree substantiated by a letter Gaunt wrote to Spring Rice on December 20, 1915:

¹⁵ T. Masaryk, The Making of a State, 1914-1918, London, p.241. G. Gaunt, The Yield of the Years, London 1940, p.167. Voska, Spy, p.29. Beneš, Memoirs, p.74. Seton-Watson, Masaryk, p.96. B. Thomson, The Scene Changes, Garden City 1937, p.323. G.J. Viereck, Spreading Germs of Hate, London 1931, p.72. W. James, The Eyes of the Navy: A Biographical Study of Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, London 1955.

These sources agree on the essentials of Voska's connection with Gaunt and his work for naval intelligence. Where these accounts are consistent with one another or when backed by documentary evidence the information has been considered reliable. The most detailed account of Voska's work can be found in his own autobiography. There is ample reason to suppose that he was prone to exaggeration and since many of his claims cannot be substantiated by documentary evidence they must be viewed with some suspicion. For that reason and for reasons of space the details of his work have not been used in the text.

¹⁶ Agent 45 to embassy, 26 Feb. 1917, F.O. 115-2183.

¹⁷ Voska, Spy, p.36.

¹⁸ Capek, Czechs, p.268.

Would it be possible for me to be allowed a small sum not exceeding Five Hundred Pounds to be placed at my disposal for use in connection for the information that is supplied to me. As I told you before, I have an office and a stenographer here New York in connection with the Czech movement - though of course the girl does not know of my existence and recently I have had to do the same thing in Chicago on account of German activities being shifted to that city

In addition to these small items occasional expenses, such as for instance, secret mission which left hurriedly for Philadelphia and other Austro-German Consulates. It was most important to know what their object was and I allowed the expenses of a patriotic man to keep in touch with them. Personally he gets no pay, his travelling expenses alone are allowed.

I have kept careful account of the sum that was allowed me before, a considerable portion of which has been used in keeping one or two men on the road who have influence among the Slav races with a view to counteracting the German propaganda. ¹⁹

It was obviously not the first such request. Although the letter contains that element of circumspection always found in official correspondence on espionage, there can be little doubt that Gaunt was referring to his Czech agents. On the basis of a strong recommendation from Spring Rice, who did not mention the Czechs, the request was approved by Nicolson who controlled the secret service fund. ²⁰

Working for Gaunt, Voska's agents were active in espionage, counter-intelligence and propaganda aimed at thwarting Austrian and German plots against the Entente in the United States. It seems that the Czechs achieved notable success in this work, contributing to a number of well-known Allied espionage coups by infiltrating the Austrian embassy as well as a number of German organizations. ²¹ In exchange the British

¹⁹ Gaunt to Spring Rice, 20 Dec. 1915, F.O. 115-1971-141. New York and Chicago had the largest concentrations of the relevant ethnic minorities.

²⁰ Spring Rice to Nicolson, 21 Dec. 1915, Nicolson to Spring Rice, 22 Dec. 1915, F.O. 115-1977-141. Nicolson to Spring Rice, 7 Dec. 1915, F.O. 115-1809-1090. Nicolson to Bertie, 4 Feb. 1916, F.O. 800-190.

²¹ Gaunt, The Yield, pp.167-168. Voska, Spy, p.38.

authorities assisted the Czechs and thereby indirectly furthered the campaign for national self-determination. For example, when the Bohemian National Alliance wanted to transfer funds to Masaryk, it was arranged.²² When members of the organization wanted to travel to Europe, the British embassy in Washington supplied the passports.²³ When the courier system through Switzerland broke down late in 1915, the British authorities helped Voska establish a new system for American-Czech couriers through Holland.²⁴ On at least one occasion when Masaryk wanted to send messages to Prague, the courier, en route from the United States to Holland, was detained by British authorities so that a meeting could be arranged with Masaryk without arousing suspicion.²⁵

In December 1915, Sir William Wiseman became the head of the British secret service (M.I.1c) in the United States. Before leaving London Wiseman met Masaryk through Seton-Watson, and it was arranged that Voska should henceforth work for Wiseman's organization.²⁶ According to Wiseman, securing the services of Voska was 'the luckiest thing that

²² Gaselee minute, 23 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-2862-12976.

²³ Gaunt to Spring Rice, 29 Nov. 1915, F.O. 115-1955. Voska, Spy, pp.47-48. According to Voska the British and French authorities gave visas which would permit travel within Allied countries to those agents of Austrian nationality who could not travel on Austrian passports.

²⁴ Beneš, Memoirs, p.74.

²⁵ Ibid, p.132. Voska, Spy, p.48. Voska claims that this was a regular procedure for arranging contact between Masaryk and the couriers.

²⁶ Wiseman to Masaryk, 31 July 1968, Wiseman Mss. 91-80. The basic structure of British intelligence is outlined in R. Deacon, A History of the British Secret Service, London 1969. M.I.1c under Captain Mansfield Cumming received its funds from the foreign office and was responsible for espionage and, in neutral countries, counter-espionage. M.I.5 under Colonel Vernon Kell received its funds from the war office and was responsible for counter-espionage in British territory. C. MacKenzie, My Life and Times, vol. IV, London 1965, p.29.

happened to me on that side of my work'.²⁷ Arthur Willert, a member of Wiseman's staff, claimed that by December 1915 Voska had eighty agents working for him. Many years later he wrote: 'Voska, whose code name was "Victor", must have one of the most outstanding of the "secret agents" of the first war.'²⁸ The relationship between the Bohemian National Alliance and the British intelligence agencies was a good example of mutually advantageous co-operation because each needed the other. As in all such relationships the government gained more because the émigrés were satisfied to wait for a future reward. The work done by the Czech agents in the United States, which will be more thoroughly discussed later in the context of Anglo-American relations, was the most valuable assistance given to the Entente by any nationality organization before 1917.²⁹

Another émigré who worked as a British agent was Count Jean Marie de Horodyski, a Galician Pole. In the spring of 1915 Horodyski, through contact with Gregory, began to work for the foreign office under Drummond's direction.³⁰ In the foreign office documents Horodyski is always referred to in such vague terms that little is revealed about his status. J.H. Priestly of M.I.1., however, not accustomed to the subtlety of the foreign office, stated in a report: 'Count de Horodyski arrived on Sunday 13/8/16

²⁷ A. Willert, Road to Safety: A Study in Anglo-American Relations, London 1952, p.24. Willert does not seem to be aware that Voska was already working for Gaunt before Wiseman arrived in America. A great deal of jealousy existed between Wiseman and Gaunt and there is very little evidence on the degree to which the work of their separate organizations was co-ordinated, if at all. Gaunt worked under the director of naval intelligence, Admiral Sir Reginald Hall.

²⁸ Ibid., p.23.

²⁹ Voska, Spy, p.39. Gaunt, The Yield, p.221. See below, pp. 83-84, 102-104, 201-203.

³⁰ Mansley to Drummond, 16 July 1915, Drummond to Rodd, 6 July 1916, F.O. 800-66. J.D. Gregory, On the Edge of Diplomacy, London 1929, p.103.

en route for London to see the Foreign Office, for whom he is now working.... He ... has been engaged in obtaining political information for the British Foreign Office.'³¹ Although Horodyski began working in Europe, he was sent in 1916 to work among the Polish organizations in the United States. Unlike Voska, he appears to have had no organization of his own, but by working directly for the foreign office, as will be explained in greater detail later, he was in a better position to influence policy.³²

In August 1914, the government created at Wellington House a propaganda agency under the direction of Charles Francis Masterman, the chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster. The creation of such an agency to influence opinion in neutral countries showed that the government was aware of the importance of neutral opinion in influencing the policies of neutral states and their relations with the Entente. The staff of Wellington House consisted of authors, journalists and academics who had some knowledge of public opinion and the ability to produce propaganda. Most of the propaganda was in the form of pamphlets dealing with the issues of the war which were either selected from those already on the market or commissioned by Wellington House. They were published commercially without any official markings so that their true origin remained secret. Great effort was always taken to surround Wellington House with a shroud of secrecy so that its propaganda would be more effective.³³

³¹ Priestly report, 23 Aug. 1916, W.O. 106-1511-26.

³² Drummond to Rodd, 16 June 1916, Drummond to Rodd, 6 July 1916, F.O. 800-66. See below, pp. 88, 113-115, 134-136.

³³ Report on Wellington House, 2 Dec. 1914, F.O. 371-2207-88913. News department memorandum, 2 Feb. 1915, Report on Wellington House, 7 June 1915, F.O. 371-2555-12467. Report on Wellington House, 1 Feb. 1916, Inf. 4-5.

The pamphlets were distributed in the United States, the most important target, by mail. The section for propaganda in America, under the direction of Gilbert Parker, the Canadian novelist, compiled a list of prominent Americans - academics, journalists, politicians, lawyers, clergy and civil servants - to whom they sent selected pamphlets. Each package contained a letter from Parker giving the impression that he was a private individual sending the pamphlets on his own initiative. The theory was that if these individuals could be influenced they would, in turn, influence the general public. By June 1915, the list consisted of at least 14,000 prominent Americans.³⁴

Any issue which reflected unfavourably on the enemy, such as the treatment of subject nationalities, was used for propaganda. The Germans followed the same policy by using the Irish problem to discredit Britain. One of the first pamphlets produced by Wellington House was The Submerged Nationalities of the German Empire and similar ones followed.³⁵ Regardless of the intentions of Wellington House, propaganda which dealt with subject nationalities helped the émigrés by focusing attention on their plight and on the issue of national self-determination. Even if national self-determination was never openly discussed, it was the obvious conclusion of any pamphlet which dealt with the suffering of subject nationalities under German, Austrian or Hungarian rule.

³⁴ Report on Wellington House, 7 June 1915, F.O.371-2555-12467. By December 1917 the list had expanded to 170,000. R. Donald, 'Report on the Purchase and Publication of Books', 7 Dec.1917, Bonar Law Ms.82-7-7.

³⁵ E. Barker, The Submerged Nationalities of the German Empire, Oxford 1915. Also see: J.B. Bury, Germany and Slavonic Civilization, London 1914. G.M. Trevelyan, The Serbians and Austria, London 1915. L. Namier, Germany and Eastern Europe, London 1915. A.J. Toynbee, The Destruction of Poland, London 1916; and H. Rosendahl, The Problem of Danish Schleswig, London 1916. All of the pamphlets attributed to Wellington House are taken from an official list in T. 102-20.

Besides focusing attention implicitly on national self-determination, some of the pamphlets came very close to actually promoting the idea. Ernest Barker, for example, stated in Great Britain's Reason for Going to War: 'England stands for the right of each national group to enjoy the form of government to which it aspires.'³⁶ G.M. Trevelyan in The Serbians and Austria wrote: 'When Eastern Europe is directed as far as possible on racial and national lines, there may at last be peace and content in those unhappy regions.'³⁷ In Germany and Eastern Europe Lewis Namier recommended independence for Czechoslovakia and wrote: 'Europe has to be rearranged in accordance with nationality.'³⁸ These are only a few examples of the type of comment relevant to national self-determination found in the pamphlets produced between 1914 and the end of 1916.³⁹

While these pamphlets were being distributed, neither national self-determination nor the promotion of that idea were part of British foreign policy. If this material went slightly beyond the limits of approved policy, the explanation can be found in the refusal of the government to define its war aims. With no direction from the foreign office on the nature of war aims and what might be published on that subject, and with no foreign office scrutiny of the propaganda, the officials of Wellington House had only Asquith's early speeches as a guide. Those speeches had

³⁶ E. Barker, Great Britain's Reason for Going to War, London 1915, p.10.

³⁷ Trevelyan, The Serbians, p.10.

³⁸ Namier, Germany, p.126.

³⁹ Also see: Anon., Hungary and the War, London 1915. C. Brereton, Who is Responsible, London 1914. J.W. Headlam, The Issue, London 1916. T. Jonescu, The Policy of National Instinct, London 1916. T. Masaryk, The Slavs Among Nations, London 1916; and Anon., The European War: Reply to the Appeal of German Theologians, London 1915.

been so vague that they could easily lead to a divergence between policy and propaganda. Many of the writers, like Trevelyan and Namier, were supporters of national self-determination, and it was quite natural for their pamphlets to reflect such sympathies. Regardless of the interpretation of the exact meaning of these vague references to the nationalities, there can be no doubt that the distribution of these pamphlets substantially contributed to the 'émigrés' campaign for national self-determination. It is almost impossible to evaluate the effect of propaganda, but it may well be that Wellington House did more to win public support for national self-determination particularly in the United States than the 'émigrés' who lacked the resources of the British government.

The use of the nationalities as a weapon of propaganda undoubtedly stimulated in Wellington House an interest in the nationality organizations. Early in 1915, on the recommendation of his good friend Lord Eustace Percy, Lewis Namier was employed by Wellington House to write summaries of the Polish press and to advise on propaganda. Namier was uniquely suited for this work because he came from an eastern Galician Jewish family which had converted to Catholicism and which had brought him up as a member of the Polish gentry. Before the war he had studied at the London School of Economics and Political Science and at Balliol College, Oxford and had worked in the United States for the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers. He undoubtedly knew more about Poland than anyone else in the British government - British officials were abysmally ignorant of the subject - but he was particularly valuable to Wellington House because of his knowledge of the eastern European minorities in the United States. While his enemies were correct in saying that his advice on Polish affairs was distorted by his own personal bias, it must be remembered

that informed, unbiased advice on Polish affairs did not exist. Namier was responsible for bringing the importance of the Polish-Americans to the attention of British officials and for establishing contact between Wellington House and the Polish émigrés.⁴⁰

Aware of the dangers from Russia of any British action on the Polish issue and holding the lowest opinion of Polish émigrés, Namier opposed government involvement with them. In a report on his relations with the émigrés he wrote:

I don't however, for a moment defend the policy of the Polish Information Committee - nothing could be worse advised than to give that any official encouragement. They try to make the Polish Question, which Russia considers an internal problem of her own, into an international question, and they advocate Polish independence. But for the same reason, in my belief, no support or encouragement should be given to any Polish politicians or organizations whatever because all of them agree on these two points, which are diametrically opposed to the programme of Russia and therefore of the Entente. The differences between Polish politicians are merely in the degree of personal honesty or dishonesty in the direction of their intrigues: usually they intrigue against the Power by which they profess to stand.⁴¹

When Namier began to compile a list of prominent American Poles for Gilbert Parker's system of distribution, he found that he had to overcome his aversion to working with the Polish émigrés and seek their support. He made an arrangement with the Polish Information Committee whereby they were supplied with pamphlets which they addressed to prominent American Poles and then returned to Wellington House. The officials sealed and mailed the packages, thus having total control over the contents.

⁴⁰ Interview with Lady Namier, 25 Aug. 1969. I. Berlin, 'Lewis Namier: A Personal Impression', A Century of Conflict. 1850-1950: Essays for A.J.P. Taylor, London 1966. A.J. Toynbee, 'Sir Lewis Namier', Acquaintances, London 1967.

⁴¹ Namier to Gowers, 15 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-255781.

As Namier pointed out, the real advantage of the arrangement was that the divergence of policy between the government and the committee would make it difficult for anyone to trace the pamphlets back to the British government.⁴² The recipients would be under the impression that they came from their own compatriots. Wellington House also produced and distributed pamphlets like Poland Under the Germans and Germany's Economic Policy in Poland which originated with the Polish Information Committee.⁴³ The committee was therefore distributing its own propaganda at the expense of the government. By the end of 1916 Wellington House distributed propaganda relevant to Poland on a large scale. Pamphlets were being produced in Polish and were distributed to over six hundred prominent Poles in the United States as well as through other Polish organizations like the Agence Polonaise Centrale and the Polish National Alliance.⁴⁴ The latter organization was based in Chicago and was associated with Horodyski's work in the United States on behalf of the Entente.

The Yugoslavs may have assisted Wellington House but, other than a few comments, there is little evidence of it in the documents. After the treaty of London, the anti-Italian flavour of Yugoslav propaganda made such co-operation difficult. The Czechs, not suffering from such inconveniences, probably established contact with Wellington House through Namier or Trevelyan. During 1915 and 1916 Wellington House produced and distributed Masaryk's two pamphlets: The Slavs Among Nations and Austrian

⁴² Namier to Gowers, 14 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-255781.

⁴³ Polish Information Committee, Germany's Economic Policy in Poland, London 1915; Poland Under the Germans, London 1916.

⁴⁴ Parker minute, 8 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-5-247999. Montgomery to Gowers, 23 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-261032.

Terrorism in Bohemia, as well as Memorial to the International From the Bohemian Branch of the Socialist Party in America, originating from the London Czech Committee.⁴⁵

Distribution of British propaganda in the United States was carried out by Voska's section of the Bohemian National Alliance which, unlike the Polish Information Committee, was allowed to work without the constant surveillance of Wellington House.⁴⁶ These differences in the relations between Wellington House and the various nationality organizations seemed to be determined largely by Namier's own preferences. On May 31, 1916, he wrote: 'None of the American Poles seem to be an element on which one could rely, or with whom one could work as one can with the Czechs or Jugoslavs ...'⁴⁷ By October 1916, about 20,000 pamphlets had been distributed by the Bohemian National Alliance,⁴⁸ and by early 1917 it had expanded its distribution to include South America.⁴⁹ Information from the Czech agents also helped Wellington House assess the type of propaganda needed in the United States.⁵⁰

There can be no doubt that the Poles and particularly the Czechs gave valuable assistance to Wellington House in the production and distribution of propaganda. The émigrés could be more effective in the

⁴⁵ T. Masaryk, The Slave Among Nations, London 1916; Austrian Terrorism in Bohemia, London 1916. London Czech Committee, Memorial to the International From the Bohemian Branch of the Socialist Party in America, London 1915.

⁴⁶ Namier to Gowers, 15 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-255781. Drummond to Miss Stevenson, 2 Nov. 1916, F.O. 800-102. Also see above, pp. 73-77.

⁴⁷ Namier, 'Observations on Polish Activities in America', 31 May 1916, F.O. 395-10-106874.

⁴⁸ Seton-Watson, Masaryk, p.100.

⁴⁹ Namier to Koppel, 31 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-75-68868.

⁵⁰ Namier to Butler, 9 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-108-51960.

distribution of pamphlets because of their contacts in the United States and because they had no apparent connection with the government. The émigrés benefited because much of the propaganda of Wellington House promoted their own cause. They also received, in effect, an indirect subsidy when Wellington House produced their own propaganda and supplied them with it. Although the effectiveness of British propaganda cannot be evaluated, it undoubtedly contributed to the campaign in the United States for national self-determination.

The nationality organizations also assisted the Entente by recruiting their compatriots for military service. Although some émigrés had expressed a willingness to serve at the very beginning of the war, such offers were not initially accepted because there was no shortage of manpower and therefore no compelling need to adopt the complex and somewhat unorthodox methods for the recruitment of enemy aliens. Only when the shortage of manpower became evident did the war office abandon its original reluctance to recruit aliens and begin, despite considerable misgiving in the foreign office, to press for the enlistment of Poles, Czechoslovaks and the Yugoslavs.

During 1915, South Slavs in Britain were released from internment for service in the Serbian army, and efforts to recruit South Slavs in neutral countries were given limited and secret government support.⁵¹ Since the British army accepted only British subjects, those Czechs and Poles who wished to serve were sent to the French Foreign Legion.⁵²

⁵¹ Percy to Seton-Watson, 2 Aug. 1915, F.O. 371-2264-103085. Trumbić to W.O., 20 Oct. 1915, H.O. 45-10795-303789.

⁵² Sargeant to H.O., 17 Mar. 1916, H.O. 45-10818-317810.

During the summer of 1916, Yugoslav recruitment became a serious issue because of the difficulty in finding replacements for the Serbian army. Since the only source of replacements were the Yugoslav communities in neutral countries, a plan for recruiting there was supported by the Yugoslav organizations, the Serbian government and the French government. The foreign office was reluctant to become involved in any recruiting scheme which would involve the United States, but the plan was supported by the war office and the cabinet.⁵³ Under pressure Grey agreed, with the greatest reluctance, to a plan whereby recruiting in the United States would be done by Yugoslav or Serbian agents who would send their recruits to Canada for training before being sent to the Serbian army. The costs involved in recruiting, training and shipment would be borne equally by the British and French governments. Grey stipulated, however, that no British official in the United States was to be involved in any way with this programme. If the recruiting agents needed assistance, they would have to look to the French authorities who, Grey believed, could act with greater impunity in the United States.⁵⁴ Grey's sensitivity on this issue stemmed from difficulties in Anglo-American relations caused by British consular officials in California who had recruited for the British army. He was not as particular about the South American states, for he

⁵³ Grey to Bertie, 11 May 1916, F.O. 371-2615-83401. W.O. to F.O., 5 Sept. 1916, Grey to Cambon, 12 Sept. 1916, F.O. 371-2615-176290. Pribićević memorandum, 2 Oct. 1916, F.O. 371-2615-195118. Col. Milan Pribićević, an Austrian South Slav, was responsible for recruiting in the United States. F.O. to Reading, 8 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-83181.

⁵⁴ F.O. to treasury, 16 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2615-222822. War committee, 20 Nov. 1916, Cab. 42-24-13. Bonar Law to Devonshire, 21 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2615-236571.

instructed British officials there to give all possible assistance to Serbian and Yugoslav agents.⁵⁵

Unlike the Yugoslavs, the Czechoslovaks and the Poles had no army to join other than the French Foreign Legion - an unappetizing prospect even for the most ardent patriot. The situation began to change in June 1916 when the war office decided to permit the enlistment of friendly aliens, which included Russians, but not German or Austrian, Poles. In August the war office went even a step further by permitting the enlistment of enemy alien 'friendlies' (Poles and Czechoslovaks) not in the army but in labour units.⁵⁶ An exception was made, however, for the Czechs who were allowed to join the army as if they were British subjects. On November 10, 1916, an instruction from the Army Council stated: 'Czechs who are in possession of a green registration certificate, duly authenticated by the Czech Committee, ... may be accepted in any category of service in which British subjects are now accepted.'⁵⁷ As a result of this decision, the London Czech Committee began to recruit in the Czech colony, and it has been estimated that ninety percent of the able-bodied Czechs in Britain volunteered for the British army.⁵⁸

The decision of the war office to recruit the citizens of an enemy power was quite remarkable, but it never gave any explanation of its

⁵⁵ Grey to Tower, 11 Dec. 1916, F.O. 371-2615-24489.

⁵⁶ Army Council Instruction 1156, 8 June 1916, W.O. 32-4773. White (W.O.) to Nolan (H.O.), 22 Aug. 1916, Wainwright to Smith, 16 Nov. 1916, Huggins to Nolan, 9 Dec. 1916, H.O. 45-10818-317810.

⁵⁷ Army Council Instruction 2120, 10 Nov. 1916, H.O. 45-10818-317810.

⁵⁸ Hanak, Great Britain, pp.117-118. By July 1917 an estimated 200 Czechs had been recruited for the British army. Seton-Watson, 'Memorandum on the Bohemian Army', 6 July 1917, F.O. 371-2804-137257. Steed, Thirty Years, p.48. Steed claims that he convinced the war office to recruit Czechs.

obvious favouritism towards the Czechs and its discrimination against the Poles. If the German and Austrian Poles were accepted into the British army, there would be little to distinguish the British treatment of them from the treatment of the Russian Poles. It may well be that fear of the possible Russian reaction to the failure of the British government to distinguish between Russian Poles and Austrian or German Poles, which might be interpreted as a tacit recognition of the indivisibility of the Polish nation, inhibited the war office. Or this favouritism might be explained by the fact that the Poles were not entirely trusted in any branch of the government while the Czechs had already proven their ability and loyalty to the Entente by services in espionage and propaganda. While the Poles in Britain were not accepted into the British army, arrangements were made for the recruitment of American Poles. In October 1916, Horodyski was sent to the United States to recruit Poles to be sent to Canada for the Canadian army. Although his mission was jointly sponsored by the war office and the foreign office, and his expenses were supplied by the government, he was instructed by Drummond before he left that while in the United States he was not a representative of the British government.⁵⁹

The enlistment of the nationalities, which began in 1916, was to become far more important later in the war. It was inspired by the war office and only reluctantly accepted by the foreign office. As in all cases of co-operation with the nationality organizations, it was based on immediate needs resulting from the war regardless of future peace terms.

⁵⁹ Drummond memorandum, 17 Oct. 1916, Drummond to Grey, 19 Sept. 1916, F.O. 800-96. Drummond minute, 23 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-102. S.R. Pliska, 'The Polish American Army, 1917-1921', The Polish Review, vol. X, no.3, 1965, p.50.

It is important to note that, while the foreign office was involved in the various aspects of co-operation discussed above, the action tended to come from other branches of the government, such as Wellington House and the war office, more specifically orientated to the conduct of the war. The foreign office co-ordinated the co-operation but seldom initiated it. It is also significant that the Czechoslovaks were pre-eminent among the nationalities for their willingness and capability to contribute to the war effort.

Between 1914 and 1916 the relations between the government and the nationalities were most significant in relation to the United States. While the foreign office in a general sense conducted Anglo-American relations, the war office, the admiralty and Wellington House used the nationalities in the United States for their own specific purposes. To some extent the foreign office oversaw and co-ordinated these activities if only to ensure that they were not carried to such an extreme as to rebound unfavourably on the government. While often unrelated to the daily conduct of Anglo-American relations, the co-operation and the reasons for it were an integral part of British foreign policy, particularly on Anglo-American relations. Only on occasion were the examples of co-operation significant enough to appear on the surface of Anglo-American relations, but, however unseen, they were always present.

The position of the United States in relation to the war was of the greatest importance to the Entente because, even if America remained neutral, the character of that neutrality could determine the course of the war. The success of the blockade depended upon a favourable reaction on the part of the American government. If the Americans decided to disregard or break the blockade because of the disruption of their

commerce and the irritation of commercial restrictions, it could have fatal consequences for the Entente. Or if the American government decided to retaliate by restrictions on trade with the Entente, it might cripple the Allied war effort. As the most powerful neutral and a major source of raw materials, munitions and loans, the United States was in a position to affect substantially the course of the war. Anglo-American relations were, therefore, the most important problem handled by the British foreign office during the period of American neutrality.

The Central powers were equally aware of the importance of the United States and, like the Entente, sought to win American support. An intense rivalry developed in which both sides tried to influence the American government. Since that government would be influenced by public opinion, both sides attempted to win public approval, if not public support. The recognition of the importance of American public opinion had contributed to the British decision to establish Wellington House. The British authorities were also aware that the population of the United States was not homogeneous in that it contained large and politically significant ethnic minorities whose support or opposition could be decisive. Grey's decision in August 1914 to cable to the American press the full text of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich's proclamation to the Poles suggests an awareness of the importance of Polish-American opinion.⁶⁰ On September 29, 1914, Parker wrote: 'The importance of influencing the public opinion of Chicago and the State of Illinois cannot be overestimated.... It is apparent that the foreign population of Chicago is very powerful and needs very careful handling.'⁶¹

⁶⁰ Healy to Grey, 16 Aug. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-39631.

⁶¹ Parker, 'Memorandum on the Attitude of the American Press', 29 Sept. 1914, Lloyd George Ms. C/25/21/1.

The initial contacts between the émigrés and the British embassy in Washington were established within a few months of the outbreak of war.⁶² Most of these contacts were insignificant except in the case of the Bohemian National Alliance which appealed to Spring Rice for the release of interned Czechs. Spring Rice was able to reassure them about the Czechs in England and able to arrange for Czech and even Croat agents to visit internment camps in Canada to arrange for the release of their compatriots.⁶³ He sought to satisfy them; for as he wrote to Grey: 'It is desirable to conciliate Bohemian opinion in U.S. as far as possible as it is strongly on the side of the Allies.'⁶⁴ He was undoubtedly motivated by the growing opposition to the Entente which was becoming evident among other minorities in the United States. In addition to fears about the Irish, Jewish and Catholic Americans, he was becoming increasingly alarmed, as his reports for January and February 1915 show, by the activities of the German-Americans. In these reports he claimed that the German-Americans, with considerable financial backing, were organizing politically in order to put pressure on Congress, influence elections and conduct German propaganda. Their immediate aim was the imposition of an embargo on the sale of arms to the Entente. If they gained the support of the Irish-Americans, whose leaders Spring Rice

⁶² Pačák to Spring Rice, 3 Oct. 1914, F.O. 115-1775-295. Spring Rice to Grey, 2 Nov. 1914, F.O. 371-1900-69905.

⁶³ Spring Rice to Grey, 16 Feb. 1915, F.O. 371-2445-27311. Spring Rice to Grey, 14 Nov. 1914, F.O. 115-1776-398. Grey to Spring Rice, 17 Nov. 1914, F.O. 115-1776-400. Voska to Spring Rice, 8 Jan. 1915, F.O. 115-1856-1. Spring Rice to Pupin, 12 April 1915, F.O. 115-1856-23.

⁶⁴ Spring Rice to Voska, 27 Jan. 1915, F.O. 115-1856-3. Spring Rice to Grey, 10 Feb. 1915, F.O. 115-1856-7.

believed were in German pay, they might even succeed.⁶⁵ On January 5, 1915, he wrote:

American opinion has on the whole been favourable to the Allies. A considerable section of it, however, that is the opinion of the German-Americans has been furiously on the side of Germany, and the average politician has much more to fear from this active, violent and interested position of the minority than from the rather tepidly taken position of the majority.⁶⁶

The dangers, while possibly exaggerated, were very real. The German and Irish Americans were unalterably opposed to the Entente and because of their size, organization and political awareness were the two most powerful ethnic groups in the United States. Their combined opposition was a threat of considerable proportions.⁶⁷ Spring Rice did not recommend any measures to counteract the activities of the German-Americans, but he did warn that the creation of a counter-balancing foreign movement was not the solution.⁶⁸ Yet this idea was implicit in his reports.

On February 12, 1915, he wrote that one American politician had said:

The Allies should refrain from following the example of the Germans and undertaking race propaganda. It was evident however that if one race organized in its own interest all the others would follow suit and as the Germans were not in the majority among the foreign element, their organization would in the end cost them dear.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Spring Rice to Grey, 25 Aug. 1914, F.O. 800-84-2. Spring Rice to Grey, 11 Dec. 1914, F.O. 115-1776-461. Spring Rice to Grey, 15 Jan. 1915, F.O. 115-1898-8. Spring Rice to Cecil, 2 Feb. 1915, F.O. 800-241. Some Irish-American leaders were in contact with the German embassy. D.R. Esslinger, 'American-German and Irish Attitudes Towards Neutrality, 1914-1917: A Study of Catholic Minorities', Catholic Historical Review, vol. 53, p.208.

⁶⁶ Spring Rice to Grey, 5 Jan. 1915, F.O. 115-1879-38.

⁶⁷ L.L. Gerson, The Hyphenate in Recent American Politics and Diplomacy, Lawrence 1964, p.50. C. Seymour, Woodrow Wilson and the World War, New Haven 1947, pp.75-78. R. Lansing, War Memoirs, New York 1935, pp.54-72. Additional information on the German-Americans can be found in C. Wittke, German-Americans and the World War, Columbus 1936 and C.J. Child, The German-Americans in Politics, 1914-1917, Madison 1939.

⁶⁸ Spring Rice to Grey, 12 Feb. 1915, F.O. 800-241.

⁶⁹ Spring Rice to Grey, 26 Feb. 1915, F.O. 800-241.

Unfortunately those ethnic minorities in the United States which were potentially anti-German - the Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and Poles - were disorganized and politically inactive. These minorities were not as numerous as the Germans or Irish and did not have their tradition of political involvement in the United States. They were not as yet factors in American politics and did not constitute a counter-balancing force to the German-Americans.⁷⁰ But the formation of the Bohemian National Alliance in 1914 showed that the situation was changing.

Late in February 1915, Namier wrote an analysis of Polish-American opinion for Wellington House. He pointed out that the Poles were roughly divided into pro-Austrian and neutral factions with Austrian agents working vigorously to win the support of all of the American Poles. The neutral faction, led by Jan Smulski of the Chicago Journal, while anti-Russian, was not opposed to Britain or France. If some effort was made, possibly through Slav émigrés like Masaryk, their support might be secured. He continued:

There is an interesting practical point in Smulski's political programme. He is in favour of a closer understanding between all the Slav nationalities in the United States.... Whatever we may think of that idea, one thing appears clearly from it, namely that the only way of approaching "the neutrals" among the American Poles and of gaining their support for our side is through the intermediary of the other American Slavs. However impracticable a Slav Union may be in Europe it is by no means impracticable in the United States and it might give excellent results.⁷¹

⁷⁰ L.L. Gerson, Woodrow Wilson and the Rebirth of Poland, New Haven 1953, p.46; The Hyphenate, p.60.

⁷¹ Namier, 'Preliminary Report from L.B. Namier based on some Polish-American Newspapers', 12 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2450-29614. The date on this memorandum signifies, not when it was written but, when it was submitted to the foreign office. Percy submitted it after writing his own memorandum but it appears, from the contents of each memorandum that Namier's preceded Percy's.

This memorandum, which might never have been seen outside of Wellington House, was brought to the attention of the foreign office by Namier's close friend, Eustace Percy, who in a separate note added his own views. After emphasizing the threat posed by the Austrian agents in the United States, Percy wrote:

the Allies want Polish opinion in America as a makeweight to the German vote, It is very possible that on the whole Polish-American opinion is with us, but the annexed appeal shows clearly that it is not with us in any positive way There is, I believe, some idea at present of starting a campaign to form Slav opinion in America. Mr. Seton-Watson has, I believe, some idea of this kind. ⁷²

Percy emphasized that the work among the American Poles had to be done by the Russians working through prominent Poles like Smulski. In addition, the greatest secrecy was necessary so as not to offend the American government which was naturally sensitive to intervention in its own internal affairs. Since the Russian government claimed priority on the Polish issue, the Polish-American problem was its responsibility. It was obvious that Russia would be more effective in dealing with the Poles because it, unlike Britain, had something to offer them. It would also be preferable if Russia not Britain took the risks involved in meddling in American internal affairs. If the Russians could be induced to tackle the problem themselves, the foreign office could also avoid the danger of offending the Russian government by working for Polish-American support.

As a result of these memoranda, the foreign office requested the views of Spring Rice, and instructed Buchanan, if he thought it prudent, to draw Sazonov's attention to the problem.⁷³ Grey was so sensitive

⁷² Percy, 'Poles in America', 3 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2450-29614.

⁷³ Grey to Spring Rice, 19 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2450-29614.

about mentioning the Poles to the Russians that he did not go so far as to make any positive proposals. The despatch, however, contained a memorandum that Buchanan, at his own discretion, could show to Sazonov. It dealt with the dangers to the Entente of Austrian attempts to win Polish support in the United States and stated:

it might be of great use to the Allies, as the war proceeds, to have in Polish American feeling, a counter-balancing influence to the German vote in the United States, though of course no action must be taken which would arouse the suspicion that we are interfering in American politics by organising a pro-Allies vote. It is obvious that no influence can be brought to bear on the American Poles except through Russia and equally obvious that H.M.G. must do nothing which would be distasteful to the Russian government in this connection. 74

The memorandum ended with a statement to which both the British and the Russians could agree: 'The whole question seems to be one which must be treated from the point of view of relations with the U.S. and not from the point of view of the Polish question in Europe.'

On April 1, 1915, Spring Rice replied to the query that a counter-weight to the German vote would be most useful but that his embassy could not become involved in its formation.⁷⁵ Before Buchanan could reply, an incident in the United States added a sense of urgency to the Polish-American problem. On April 5, 1915, almost four hundred American foreign language newspapers published an appeal for an embargo on the sale of arms to the Entente. The appeal had been engineered by Louis Hammerling, the head of the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers. Control over the advertising accounts, which were a major source of income for these small newspapers, gave Hammerling some power over their editorial

⁷⁴ Grey to Buchanan, 13 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2450-29614.

⁷⁵ Spring Rice to Grey, 1 April 1915, F.O. 115-1960-4.

policy which enabled him to arrange for the publication and endorsement of the appeal. Of those newspapers involved, forty-eight were Polish and twenty-seven were Austrian Slav.⁷⁶ The possibility of an arms embargo resulting from such a campaign was an immediate and direct threat to the interests of the Entente. Hammerling's control over the foreign language press was a serious threat because, although most of the American Slavs were not opposed to the Entente, they could, over a period of time, be alienated from it because of the influence of their own press. If the Entente was ever to win their support, Hammerling's influence had to be destroyed.

With greater urgency, Grey addressed another despatch to Buchanan in which he emphasized that the threat of an arms embargo now made action on the Polish-American problem a military necessity. An accompanying memorandum stated:

In general it may be said that the agitation against the export of arms is the one form of German agitation in the United States which is, on the whole, making distinct headway. The possibility that agitation will have some measure of success ... is the one distinct danger to the relations between the Allies and the United States.⁷⁷

The British foreign office did not want the Russians to organize the American Poles; that was neither possible nor prudent. Organization of

⁷⁶ Namier, 'Analysis of the Signatures in the Manifesto', 13 April 1915, F.O. 371-2450-43258. Hammerling came from the same part of Galicia as Namier and was closely connected to Namier's family. Before the war Namier worked for Hammerling in the United States and was, therefore, able to supply the foreign office with information about Hammerling's activities. Interview with Lady Namier, 25 Aug. 1969. Toynbee, Acquaintances, pp.71-72. Berlin, 'Namier', pp.223-4. Viereck, Germs of Hate, pp.100-101. Pupin to Spring Rice, 31 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2450-43258. Martin Egan to Smith, 15 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2450-41805. Spring Rice to Grey, 9 April 1915, F.O.115-1962-179.

⁷⁷ Grey to Buchanan, 23 April 1915, F.O. 371-2449-46628.

the Poles had to be done by their own leaders. The foreign office wanted the Russians to produce propaganda on the Polish issue and to attempt to win the support of the Polish organizations by working through Polish leaders favourable to the Entente. But the appeals to Sazonov had little effect because neither he nor the Russian ambassador in Washington showed any enthusiasm for working with the American Poles.⁷⁸ Sazonov did not reject the idea, but he took no action. By June 15, 1915, the foreign office realized that further appeals to Sazonov were useless and abandoned them. It had raised the issue with some trepidation and would not continue to risk offending the Russians.

While these negotiations were in progress, the British officials were working among the other Austrian Slavs in the United States as they hoped the Russians would work among the Poles. But while the support of the Poles had yet to be won, the other Slavic minorities were already potential supporters of the Entente. The problem was how that support could be used most effectively. The British authorities wanted the various Slavic minorities to state publicly their support for the Entente and to be seen to organize for political purposes so as to offset the potential German-American influence on the American politicians.

On April 11, 1915, G.M. Trevelyan arrived in the United States on the invitation of Harvard University to speak on Serbian Relief.⁷⁹ He appeared to be merely a private citizen, although he carried with him five

⁷⁸ Grey to Buchanan, 4 May 1915, F.O. 371-2450-43258. Buchanan to Grey, 30 May 1915, F.O. 371-2450-68990. Buchanan to Grey, 22 April 1915, F.O. 371-2450-55258. Grey to Buchanan, 1 June 1915, F.O. 371-2450-68990. Buchanan to Grey, 8 June 1915, F.O. 371-2450-73841. Spring Rice to Grey, 29 May 1915, F.O. 115-1960-7.

⁷⁹ Trevelyan, 'Report on Observations, Made on Tour in the United States, April 12-May 22, 1915', 4 June 1915, Cab. 37-129-13.

hundred Wellington House pamphlets on eastern Europe.⁸⁰ The original suggestion of the visit was made sometime before March 9, 1915, about the same time that Percy brought the Polish-American issue to the attention of the foreign office.⁸¹ On March 14, 1915, Trevelyan wrote to Runciman:

It has been settled that I am to go to America, but only if and when I am invited to lecture on Serbia etc. by Harvard or some other University. Steps are being taken to see if such an invitation can be got. Meanwhile the affair is private and I am not telling those whom it does not concern.⁸²

Like Namier, Trevelyan worked for Wellington House which had, in conjunction with the foreign office, arranged the trip.⁸³ The invitation, arranged after it was decided to send him, was merely a cover. Reasons of security dictated that the real purpose of Trevelyan's mission was never clearly stated in any official document. Spring Rice was, for example, always concerned about the security of his reports and was therefore always circumspect in dealing with sensitive issues. He once wrote to Drummond: 'It is dangerous to give intimate personal details in writing.'⁸⁴ Since the greatest mistake of German agents in the United States during the war was to keep thorough written records, this concern for security was justified. Trevelyan's official status was secret, he was a friend of Seton-Watson, and he was a supporter of national self-determination; if the government wanted someone with great influence

⁸⁰ Grey to Spring Rice, 31 Mar. 1915, F.O. 115-1962-156.

⁸¹ Trevelyan to Runciman, 9 Mar. 1915, Runciman Mss.

⁸² Trevelyan to Runciman, 14 Mar. 1915, Runciman Mss.

⁸³ Report on Wellington House, 7 June 1915, Cab. 37-130-35. Grey to Spring Rice, 11 Mar. 1915, F.O. 115-1961-127.

⁸⁴ Spring Rice to Drummond, 23 Jan. 1916, F.O. 300-86.

among the nationalities to act as a liaison between the British authorities in Washington and the various American Slavic leaders, it could not have made a better choice than G.M. Trevelyan. Despite government secrecy, a number of official references to Trevelyan's work, along with what is known of his movements in the United States, give an indication of the nature of his mission. On April 1, 1915, Spring Rice, who always claimed that his officials could have nothing to do with the organization of the American Slavs, wrote:

The organization of the American Slavs here is a matter which they must arrange themselves. I have no doubt however that the advent of a gentleman like Mr. Trevelyan who can present the Slav cause before the American public will be of immense service in bringing home to them [the Slavs] the duties they have to the interests of their races in this continent, ... [in organizing against the German-Americans].⁸⁵

Trevelyan arrived in the United States a week after the publication of the appeal for an arms embargo. In discussing possible measures to counteract Hammerling's campaign, such as organization of the American Slavs, Percy showed that Trevelyan was expected to do more than discuss Serbian Relief: 'The nourishment of a pan-Slav feeling of this kind cannot be much helped on by the F.O. and it may be left in the hands of those people who are already doing a good deal to foster it - especially Mr. Seton-Watson and Mr. Trevelyan.'⁸⁶ It is difficult to believe that the government was so concerned about Serbian Relief as to send Trevelyan, particularly since the sending of lecturers to the United States was contrary to the policy of Wellington House. In his own report, written after his return on May 22, 1915, and submitted to the cabinet, Trevelyan

⁸⁵ Spring Rice to Grey, 1 April 1915, F.O. 115-1960-4.

⁸⁶ Percy minute, 14 April 1915, F.O. 371-2450-43258.

wrote: 'My only public activity was lecturing on Serbia and the Austrian and Balkan questions.' He also stated:

... Croats, Serbs, Slovaks and Czechs are all strongly pro-Ally. I saw their leaders at Chicago and New York. These various branches of the Slav race are drawing together and being organized politically to counteract the German vote and influence.⁸⁷

If Trevelyan's sole interest had been Serbian Relief and Balkan questions, why did he contact the Czech and Slovak leaders in Chicago and New York? According to James Stepina, the treasurer of the Bohemian National Alliance, in their meetings Trevelyan urged the various Slav leaders to oppose Hammerling and those newspapers which had supported the appeal for an arms embargo.⁸⁸ It is also probable that Trevelyan urged the leaders of the Czechs, Slovaks, Croats and Serbs to organize their supporters for political purposes, to co-ordinate their activities and to work towards that union of Slavs which Namier thought possible and the foreign office desirable. The true reason for the Trevelyan mission was probably to promote, in his own words, political consciousness among the Slavs. According to Spring Rice, his work was 'extraordinarily useful'.⁸⁹

The work of Spring Rice on this issue is difficult to determine because his own reports cannot be accepted at face value. He always disclaimed any involvement in the organization of the various Slavic minorities because it was not diplomatically correct for official representatives of the British government to advise American citizens on the subject of American politics. Yet he never opposed Gaunt's use of

⁸⁷ Trevelyan, 'Report', 4 June 1915, Cab. 37-129-13.

⁸⁸ Stepina to Seton-Watson, 11 May 1915, F.O. 115-1960-11.

⁸⁹ Spring Rice to Grey, 30 April 1915, F.O. 800-85.

the Czechs for naval intelligence.⁹⁰ On March 20, 1915, he even recommended that Supilo should be sent, at the expense of the government, to the United States to work on the organization of the American Slavs.⁹¹ His remarks on protocol obviously referred only to known representatives of the government and not to agents like Trevelyan who were secretly employed. He was not opposed to involvement but merely the appearance of involvement.

Possible action by Spring Rice on this problem was limited; he could not himself organize the Slavs. He was, however, in contact with the various Austrian Slavic leaders and from them learned the prevailing mood among the ethnic minorities. Much of the information he used in his reports probably came from such sources. While he might not have given them advice on American politics, he undoubtedly expressed his opinion that political organization and co-ordination among the various Slavic minorities was in their own interest in view of the political influence of the German-Americans. He may have even encouraged them.⁹² By April 17, 1915, he was able to write optimistically: 'The Slavs are at last beginning to organize and are setting to work in earnest to defend themselves against the constant and virulent German attacks to which they have been exposed and which they deeply resent.'⁹³

The efforts of Trevelyan and Spring Rice to use the Austrian Slavs

⁹⁰ See above, p.75.

⁹¹ Spring Rice to F.O., 20 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2559-32960.

⁹² Pupin to Spring Rice, 6 April 1915, F.O. 371-2450-52170. Pupin to Spring Rice, 12 April 1915, Spring Rice to Pupin, 16 April 1915, F.O. 115-1962-184. Spring Rice to Grey, 1 April 1915, F.O. 371-2450-43258. Spring Rice to Grey, 6 June 1915, F.O. 371-2450-81776.

⁹³ Spring Rice to Primrose, 17 April 1915, F.O. 115-1962-189.

in America against the German-Americans were supported by the propaganda campaign of Wellington House on eastern European questions which was now gaining momentum and which was to be a continuing influence throughout 1915 and 1916. Some of the political organization was done by Voska who informed Masaryk in March 1915 that contact had been established between the Czechs and Slovenes.⁹⁴ Czech agents were also active in counter-acting German intrigues among the Slovaks who had been slower than the Czechs to organize.⁹⁵ By June 1915, the various Slavic minorities; Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Czechs and Slovenes; seem to have achieved some degree of co-ordination with one another. Concerted action had been initiated to offset the influence of the German-Americans.⁹⁶ The desired Slav union now seemed possible although much still needed to be done.

Hammerling's campaign for an arms embargo was a more immediate and tangible threat to the Entente than the German-American vote. The danger could be eliminated by weakening Hammerling's hold over the foreign language press. Both Trevelyan and Spring Rice urged the leaders of the nationality organizations to repudiate Hammerling and to establish political control over their own press. On April 7, 1915, Spring Rice, who was not above veiled threats, wrote to Pupin, the most important South Slav organizer in the United States:

I fear that friends in Europe will not fully understand how it happens that anyone however influential has been able to obtain the assent of the leaders of Slav public opinion, as represented by the newspapers, to such a declaration as we have seen printed. It would be very regrettable if this policy were to be continued.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Voska to Masaryk, 14 March 1914, F.O. 371-2241-58359. Voska, Spy, p.32.

⁹⁵ Percy minute, 31 May 1915, F.O. 371-2450-68990.

⁹⁶ Percy to T. Spring Rice, 10 June 1915, F.O. 115-1960-11.

⁹⁷ Spring Rice to Pupin, 7 April 1915, F.O. 115-1962-176.

On the same day he urged the foreign office to act: 'Please draw attention of Slav and Jewish leaders in England to the disastrous result to their interests among the allied countries of allowing their national press to be misused for such purposes. Steps are being taken here.'⁹⁸ While the government had never promised national self-determination in exchange for support, it was quite clear that any group which opposed the Entente could expect nothing. The émigrés were left to draw their own conclusions. Seton-Watson was asked to bring the matter to the attention of all Czechoslovak agents going to the United States. In May 1915, apparently as a result of the efforts of Spring Rice and the foreign office, the Bohemian National Alliance and the Slovak League of America publicly repudiated any support for an arms embargo. The Bohemian National Alliance, undoubtedly under Voska's guidance, also convinced many of the Slavic newspapers to repudiate the appeal for an arms embargo they had originally endorsed.⁹⁹ This action contributed to the ultimately successful British campaign to eliminate Hammerling as a serious threat.

It was not enough, however, to stop the campaign for an arms embargo because German agents were also sabotaging the sale of arms to the Entente by promoting strikes in munitions factories. One hundred and three such strikes in a three month period of 1915 were not pure coincidence.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Spring Rice to Primrose, 7 April 1915, F.O. 371-2560-41690.

⁹⁹ Stepina to Seton-Watson, 11 May 1915, F.O. 115-1960-11. Seton-Watson, Masaryk, p.98. Voska, Spy, pp.94-110.

¹⁰⁰ Seymour, Wilson, pp.78-79. Lansing, Memoirs, pp.64-71. C.C. Tansill, America Goes to War, Boston 1938, p.385. E.R. May, The World War and American Isolation, 1914-1917, Cambridge 1959, p.164. C.J. Child, 'German-American Attempts to Prevent the Exportation of Munitions of War, 1914-1915', Mississippi Valley Historical Review, vol.XXV, 1938-1939, pp.351-368.

On June 10, 1915, Spring Rice wrote to Grey: 'Violent efforts are being made by the Germans to induce the labourers employed in the arms factories to strike. The leaders of the Italians and the Slavs are doing everything to prevent it.'¹⁰¹ The assistance given by the émigrés to the government in confronting this threat can be seen by a report by Nicolson which stated:

The Foreign Office have had several rumours about strikes in the United States engineered by German agents.... Efforts were being made some time ago among the Czech and Slovak workmen, but a good deal has been done lately by European Czech emissaries to counteract these intrigues, and the workmen of these two races are probably safe now.¹⁰²

The nationality organizations counteracted the attempts to promote unrest in the munitions industry by warning their compatriots not to strike; much of the work being done by Voska and his agents.¹⁰³ An unsigned report in the embassy files dated June 28, 1915, probably from Gaunt, gives an indication of the type of work done by Voska:

About two months ago at a General Meeting of the Federation of Labour at New York it was decided to have a big strike in the Ammunition Works turning out goods for the Allies. That resolution was referred to the Executive Committee in Chicago with Gompers sitting as Chairman. The result was an equal ballot, About ten days ago Congressman Buchanan of Illinois brought the matter up again and ... it had been arranged to carry the resolution in favour of a strike by one vote. Fortunately Mr. Vaska [sic] (a Bohemian gentleman) got wind of it, and the vote went against them by a majority of one vote. Fortunately Mr. Vaska [sic] (a Bohemian gentleman) got Vaska [sic] two thousand dollars apiece. ---

The original source of the four thousand dollars was never disclosed.

The document gives a sample of Voska's work for naval intelligence and substantiates, to some degree, the published accounts. Space does not

¹⁰¹ Spring Rice to Grey, 10 June 1915, F.O. 800-85.

¹⁰² Nicolson to Spring Rice, 15 June 1915, F.O. 115-1957-45. Gaunt to Spring Rice, 16 June 1915, F.O. 115-1960-12.

¹⁰³ Seton-Watson, Masaryk, p.98. Voska, Spy, p.130. See above, pp.73-77.

¹⁰⁴ Unsigned note, 28 June 1915, F.O.115-1957-41. Voska, Spy, p.132.

permit a thorough discussion of his work on propaganda, espionage and counter-intelligence, in which he achieved a reasonable degree of success, but there can be no doubt that it was a substantial contribution to the Entente.¹⁰⁵ Until the United States entered the war, Voska continued this work which was a major aspect of the British use of the nationalities in America.

By July 1915, when it was obvious that the Russians would do nothing about the American Poles, the British authorities had achieved some success in promoting political consciousness among the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks in the United States. These nationalities were organizing and working in their own interests, and those of the Entente, against the German-Americans. They publicly supported the Entente and privately continued to assist the government in espionage and propaganda.¹⁰⁶ Although their relations continued with the admiralty, war office and Wellington House, the fact that their support had been secured and channelled into desired directions meant that they ceased to be an important issue for the foreign office. Attention was now directed towards the American Poles who were as yet uncommitted.

The American Poles were important to the Entente because their numerical strength was greater than all of the other Slavic minorities combined.¹⁰⁷ The Czechs, though few in number, might be important

¹⁰⁵ See above, pp.73-77.

¹⁰⁶ Fisher to Spring Rice, 11 Sept. 1915, F.O. 115-1856-40. Colville Barclay to Grey, 27 Sept. 1915, F.O.371-2241-149001. Gaunt to Spring Rice, 20 Dec. 1915, F.O.115-1977-141. Spring Rice to Grey, 30 Aug. 1915, F.O.115-1856-39.

¹⁰⁷ There were about four million Polish-Americans, one million Yugoslavs, 500,000 Czechs (not Slovaks) and about eight million German-Americans. J. Rouček, Poles in the United States of America, Gdynia 1937, p.11. Wittke, German-Americans, p.3. Capek, Čechy, p.59. R.J.Kerner, Yugoslavia, Berkeley 1949, p.59. These statistics are not entirely
(cont.)

because of their work for the government, but the Poles were a necessary part of any effective counterbalancing force to the German-American vote. More than any other Slavic minority in the United States, the Poles could become a real and important factor in American politics. During 1915 the government confined its activities on the Polish-American problem to propaganda and it does not appear as if any significant contact was established with the Polish-American organizations.¹⁰⁸ The government could not deal with the Poles as it had dealt with the others. Diplomatic protocol gave the initiative to the Poles who, unlike the others, did not appear willing to donate their services to the Entente.

The American Poles were disorganized and politically divided. While their leaders often favoured Austria or the Entente but were never entirely committed to either, the bulk of the Poles were neutral. Unlike the other nationalities, the Poles had a choice, albeit between the lesser of evils, because they could expect little from either the Entente or the Central powers. The American Polish community would ultimately favour whatever side offered Poland the most and therefore the leading Poles could hardly afford to commit themselves to one side as the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs had done.¹⁰⁹ If the Poles were to be used as a counterweight to the German vote, their support had yet to be won and similar efforts by Austrian agents had to be thwarted. In competition with the Austrians, however, the British were placed in an almost impossible position by the

reliable particularly in the case of the Yugoslavs and Czechs who, in any pre-war census, were listed as Austrians. But there can be no doubt that the Poles were the largest Slavic minority and that they did not equal the German-Americans.

¹⁰⁸ Grey to Buchanan, 14 June 1915, F.O. 371-2447-76757.

¹⁰⁹ Gerson, Woodrow Wilson, pp.50-52.

Russian government because nothing could be offered in exchange for support. Possibly the most the British could achieve would be to neutralize Polish opinion so that it would not support the Central powers.

The competition for Polish support began in earnest over the issue of Polish relief. The idea had been discussed early in 1915, but it did not become an important issue until September, after the German occupation of Russian Poland.¹¹⁰ The foreign office disliked the idea of Polish relief, assuming that it was promoted by the Germans to embarrass the Entente and win the support of the American Poles. While the British government attributed food shortages in an agricultural country like Poland to German requisitions, it could, as the blockading power, be made to appear responsible for the failure of assistance to reach Poland. Although allowing relief appeared equivalent to aiding the Central powers by making food requisitioning easier, the idea could not be entirely rejected without appearing responsible, especially to the Poles, for any ensuing starvation in Poland.

Serious negotiations on Polish relief began in January 1916 on the instigation of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the American government, both of which attempted to mediate between the belligerents. The active role of the American government in these negotiations was an unmistakable sign of President Wilson's developing interest in the Polish problem.¹¹¹ Now the British government could not avoid the issue without

¹¹⁰ Grey to Spring Rice, 19 Mar. 1915, F.O. 115-1960-3. Grey to Buchanan, 23 April 1915, F.O. 371-2449-46628. Grey to Buchanan, 23 July 1915, Grey to Buchanan, 29 July 1915, F.O. 371-2449-96430. Crewe, 'Memorandum on Polish Relief', 24 Dec. 1915, Cab. 37-139-52.

¹¹¹ Gerson, Woodrow Wilson, pp.55-66. According to Gerson, Wilson's interest in Poland was based on the size of the Polish-American vote.

risking the alienation of the American government, the Poles, and neutral opinion.¹¹² Throughout the negotiations, the knowledge that German agents were active in the United States trying to win Polish support and that they would use this issue for that purpose inspired the foreign office to handle the negotiations with the greatest care so as to throw the blame for the failure of any relief programme on the Central powers.¹¹³ With that in mind the Entente accepted, on May 10, 1916, a programme for relief suggested by the American government on condition that the Central powers cease requisitioning food in occupied Poland. To this offer the German government never replied, and although the mediators continued to work for Polish relief, the stalemate between the belligerents was never overcome. By conditionally accepting the American programme, the British government was able to prevent Polish relief on unacceptable terms while avoiding the appearance of responsibility for its failure. Through the careful handling of these negotiations, it avoided alienating the Poles, but it is doubtful whether it won any additional Polish support.

During the negotiations, the propaganda of Wellington House on issues related to Poland increased. It was probably during this period that Namier began, on behalf of Wellington House, to use the Polish Information

112 'Correspondence Respecting the Relief of Allied Territories in the Occupation of the Enemy', 31 Aug. 1916, F.O. 395-26. This collection of correspondence was published as part of the propaganda following the negotiations. It contains the more important letters and gives an outline of the negotiations. It has been cited in preference to citing all the correspondence as separate items.

113 Spring Rice to Drummond, 30 Jan. 1916, Spring Rice to Drummond, 23 Mar. 1916, F.O. 800-86. Spring Rice to F.O., 24 Mar. 1916, F.O. 115-2124-9. Spring Rice to F.O., 6 April 1916, F.O. 115-2124-17. Gaunt to Spring Rice, 12 April 1916, F.O. 115-2124-20. Spring Rice to Grey, 18 April 1916, F.O. 371-2818-83773. Nugent to Spring Rice, 24 April 1916, F.O. 115-2124-28. Spring Rice to Grey, 3 July 1916, F.O. 371-2818-12867.

Committee for the distribution of pamphlets in the United States. After the negotiations, the production of Polish propaganda became intensive and continued well into 1917.¹¹⁴ It was accompanied by an equally intensive German propaganda campaign and, while each campaign might have neutralized the effect of the other on the Polish Americans, the combined effect of all of the propaganda strengthened the Poles in the United States by bringing their cause to the attention of the general public. The issue of Polish relief marked the real beginning of American sympathy for the Polish cause.¹¹⁵

The negotiations also led to contacts between the British embassy and Polish leaders like Jan Smulski and Ignacy Paderewski.¹¹⁶ In May 1916, Spring Rice arranged for one of Paderewski's supporters to visit internment camps in Canada to arrange for the release of interned Poles; a step which usually signified the development of close relations between the government and the nationality organizations.¹¹⁷ But, although contact was established, close relations did not develop as they did with the other nationalities. The others offered concrete assistance unconditionally whereas the Poles offered nominal support in exchange for concessions on Polish relief. Since the government did not want any programme for Polish relief to succeed, it merely wanted to cast the blame for failure on the Germans, vague promises of Polish support were not

¹¹⁴ Papers relating to propaganda on Poland can be found in abundance in F.O. 395, volumes: 5, 10, 26, 41, 69, 75, 96, 108, 139.

¹¹⁵ R. Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, London 1932, p.59. H.H. Fisher, America and the New Poland, New York 1928, pp.75-91.

¹¹⁶ Smulski to Spring Rice, 26 Jan. 1916, F.O. 115-2124-2. Spring Rice to F.O., 24 Mar. 1916, F.O. 115-2124-9. Paderewski to Spring Rice, 2 April 1916, F.O. 115-2124-17. Gerson, Woodrow Wilson, p.48.

¹¹⁷ Paderewski to Spring Rice, 20 May 1916, F.O. 115-2124-42.

worth such concessions.¹¹⁸ Until at least September 1916, there is no evidence of any Polish organization in the United States co-operating with or assisting the British authorities as the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs had been doing for over a year. Paderewski and Smulski warned Spring Rice that unless concessions were made on Polish relief the mass of the Poles might turn against the Entente.¹¹⁹ These warnings made the officials careful but did not endear them to the Poles. Along with the reports of the pro-Austrian activities of many Poles, they gave the British officials the impression that the Poles were politically unstable and, unlike the others, not entirely trustworthy.¹²⁰

If British policy on Polish relief and the accompanying propaganda had any effect on Polish-American opinion, it was not obvious to the British authorities. The activities of enemy agents may have been thwarted and the status quo of Polish opinion maintained, but it did not appear as if Polish support had been won. On July 1, 1916, Spring Rice wrote of the Polish vote:

The result is rather uncertain - they drift one way or the other. But they are not solidaire with either one side or the other and though Catholic are Slav. But the general result is vague; you cannot say for certain which way a Pole will go.¹²¹

Throughout 1916 the American presidential election, due in November, was a major preoccupation of Spring Rice. Wilson, a Democrat, was running for his second term against the Republican candidate Charles E. Hughes, a former member of the supreme court. Had the candidates favoured

¹¹⁸ Grey to Buchanan, 29 April 1916, Cab. 37-146-28.

¹¹⁹ Spring Rice to F.O., 24 Mar. 1916, F.O. 115-2124-9.

¹²⁰ Spring Rice to F.O., 17 April 1916, F.O. 115-2124-20. Spring Rice to Grey, 18 April 1916, F.O. 371-2818-83773.

¹²¹ Spring Rice to Montgomery, 7 July 1916, F.O. 395-6-139917.

different sides in the war, the election would have had great significance for the belligerents who might have been inspired to interfere in American politics. But on July 21, 1916, Spring Rice wrote to Grey:

As I have frequently had occasion to observe the British Government has no interest in the success of either party. The platforms do not differ in any essential point Neither one candidate nor the other can be said to have strong leanings towards either one party or the other in the European conflict. They both publicly profess absolute neutrality. ¹²²

The interests of the Entente were not bound to either candidate although some officials might have preferred Wilson. The government, regardless of such preferences, took pains to appear completely disinterested in the election. In October 1916, the foreign office warned members of the cabinet not to give any interviews to American newspapers and warned the British press to make no comment on the American election. ¹²³

There is, indeed, no evidence of any involvement in the promotion of either of the candidates. On June 2, 1916, Gaunt wrote to Spring Rice that he had been asked, probably by the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs, which candidate was to be supported. ¹²⁴ Spring Rice replied: 'Say they are better judges than we are and we must not give any advice as principle we go on is non-interference as against German interference. Please destroy draft of your tel. No. 79 at once by fire.' ¹²⁵

Although the outcome of the election was a matter of indifference, Spring Rice was deeply concerned about the election campaign. From

¹²² Spring Rice to Grey, 21 July 1916, F.O. 115-2126-21.

¹²³ Cecil to cabinet, 17 Oct. 1916, F.O. 395-7-208730. 'Memorandum on American Election', 5 Oct. 1916, H.O. 139-39.

¹²⁴ Gaunt to Spring Rice, 2 June 1916, F.O. 115-2125-7.

¹²⁵ Spring Rice to Grey, 3 May 1916, F.O. 115-2125-10.

January until November he sent countless despatches to the foreign office concerning the growing strength of the German-American vote and its effect on the campaign.¹²⁶ To the parliamentary under-secretary of state and minister of blockade, Lord Robert Cecil, he wrote on February 12, 1916: 'The governing fact in the situation is that the German-American voters are organized and the other foreigners are not. This gives a large organized mass like that of the Germans, ... a preponderating influence in the country.'¹²⁷

Spring Rice was concerned not about who would win, but how they would win. He feared that one of the candidates, in order to gain the support of the German-Americans, would secretly agree to adopt certain pro-German policies.¹²⁸ This fear was reinforced by the apparent danger that the Irish, Jewish, Hungarian, Catholic and Polish voters would ally with the German-Americans to form a voting bloc so large that no politician could afford to overlook it.¹²⁹ On July 14, 1916, he wrote to Lord Hardinge, who had replaced Nicolson as permanent under-secretary of state: 'Somebody said that the German vote was like a Ford car or a mistress. More people would like to have it than to be seen with it'.¹³⁰

The obvious way to counteract this threat was not to support one of the candidates but to create a counterweight to the German vote so that

¹²⁶ Spring Rice to F.O., 1 Feb. 1916, F.O. 115-2125-3. Spring Rice to Grey, 12 Feb. 1916, Cab. 37-142-35.

¹²⁷ Spring Rice to Cecil, 12 Feb. 1916, F.O. 800-195.

¹²⁸ Spring Rice to Grey, 1 May 1916, F.O. 115-2125-5. Spring Rice to Grey, 19 May 1916, F.O. 800-242. Spring Rice to F.O., 30 May 1916, F.O. 800-86. Spring Rice to Grey, 2 June 1916, F.O. 115-2125-9. Spring Rice to F.O., 16 June 1916, F.O. 800-86.

¹²⁹ Spring Rice to Grey, 31 Mar. 1916, F.O. 899-10-146.

¹³⁰ Spring Rice to Hardinge, 14 July 1916, Hardinge Mss. 23.

none of the politicians would benefit by a deal with the German-Americans. The factions would cancel out one another, and the candidates would be able to retain their position of neutrality. The Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs were already a counterweight but of insufficient size to be important. The solution to the problem lay with the Poles.

On July 6, 1916, Drummond asked Rodd to arrange a visit to the Vatican for Count Horodyski. He explained that the visit was important because of the Polish vote in the United States.¹³¹ A day later, after reading one of Spring Rice's pessimistic despatches, he wrote to Grey:

I do not think we need at all despair of getting the Polish vote in the United States generally on the side of the Allies when the time comes for the Presidential elections the Austrians have been working hard among the Poles in the U.S. and have had some success, but not of such a character that when the right moment arrives for our friends to go to work, which I am told is just before the elections, the position cannot be completely changed in the Allies favour.¹³²

On August 23, 1916, Drummond asked Spring Rice about the possibility of Horodyski being sent to the United States to work on the Polish vote.¹³³ Spring Rice replied that British officials could not advise American citizens on how to vote and that the outcome of the election did not matter, but he added: 'What is required is a body of voters animated by resolve to counteract weight of German vote which at present is prevailing factor. Change the wind and you will change the weathercock.'¹³⁴ Arrangements had already been made with the war office to send Horodyski to the United States, at the expense of the government, to recruit Poles for the Canadian army.¹³⁵ Drummond instructed Horodyski that he was not, while

¹³¹ Drummond to Rodd, 6 July 1916, F.O. 800-66.

¹³² Drummond to Grey, 7 July 1916, F.O. 371-2818-128677.

¹³³ Drummond to Spring Rice, 23 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-86.

¹³⁴ Spring Rice to Drummond, 6 Sept. 1916, F.O. 800-86.

¹³⁵ See above, pp.87-88.

recruiting in the United States, a representative of the British government.

In a report to Grey on these instructions, he wrote:

... I told him that while we would of course be very glad to see the Polish vote consolidated in order to counteract the German vote, we could not possibly offer any advice as to on which side it should be cast and that if he wished to do anything he had better go out there and judge for himself, but that in this case also it must be perfectly clear that he was not acting as our agent in any way, nor could we provide for any expenditure.¹³⁶

This description of Horodyski's status, probably the result of Drummond's desire for secrecy, cannot for a moment be taken seriously. Recruiting of Poles in the United States for service in the armies of the Entente was a political activity requiring organization. The distinction between organization for enlistment and organization for the election was completely artificial. While not a representative of the government, Horodyski was its paid agent. Since it must have been perfectly obvious that if sent to the United States he would become involved in political organization for the election, officials like Drummond, who sent him, cannot entirely disclaim responsibility for his subsequent action regardless of the conditions which they appeared to stipulate prior to his departure. Horodyski arrived in the United States in October 1916 and did some political work among the Polish voters, although the details cannot be determined.¹³⁷ Gaunt acted as his official contact, and it is no coincidence that shortly after his arrival Paderewski's organization, the Polish National Alliance, began to distribute British propaganda.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Drummond to Grey, 19 Sept. 1916, F.O. 800-96.

¹³⁷ Horodyski to Drummond, 14 Nov. 1916. Drummond to Horodyski, 24 Nov. 1916, F.O. 800-108.

¹³⁸ Montgomery to Gowers, 23 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-261032. Drummond minute, 18 Jan. 1918, F.O. 800-384.

After the election Horodyski claimed, with some accuracy, that Wilson was re-elected by the Polish vote.¹³⁹ Horodyski's mission was significant as the first important example of co-operation between the government and some of the Polish organizations in the United States.

During 1915 and 1916 the British government became deeply involved with the nationality organizations, not because it accepted their aims but because it needed them as weapons of war. This involvement was related more to the United States than to Europe because it resulted from the competition for American support. To the British the use of the nationalities seemed necessary in order to counteract German initiatives. The organization of the German-American vote, the threat of an arms embargo, and the promotion of strikes in munitions factories all demanded a response from the British government whose agents naturally turned to the other minorities in the United States as convenient weapons against the German-Americans. This Anglo-German competition in the United States in turn affected American politics.

In 1914, the Yugoslav, Czechoslovak and Polish minorities in the United States, being unorganized and politically passive, were not sufficiently important factors in American politics to influence American government policy. After the outbreak of war the situation began to change because these national minorities underwent a political awakening which led to organization for the purpose of influencing American politics. Although the potential influence of the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs was

¹³⁹ Gerson, Woodrow Wilson, pp.65-66. Gerson claims that Wilson, facing a very difficult election, also wanted the Poles to organize the Polish vote into a solid bloc. He also shows in this study that the Polish vote was an important contributing factor to Wilson's victory. There seems to be little doubt that Wilson's interest in Poland was based on the internal political situation.

severely limited by their size, by the end of 1916, the Poles had become a real and important factor in American politics. The interest of the American government in Polish relief showed that it was aware of the importance of the Polish vote.

National self-determination as a specific political programme for eastern Europe was not an indigenous American idea, but one imported from Europe by the belligerents and the émigrés. The interest of the American public in national self-determination for eastern Europe was the product of the work of the émigrés as well as the propaganda which resulted from the competition between the belligerents for American support. The growth of the political power of the nationalities and the interest of the general public in their cause inspired American politicians, for the first time, to interest themselves in the question.

No single group was solely responsible for the development of these general trends in American politics. But in the distribution of propaganda and in the assistance and encouragement given to the nationality organizations the British government made a substantial contribution to the spread of the idea of national self-determination and to the growth of the nationality organizations. In doing so, the government helped to create conditions which, in future, it could not overlook in the formation of foreign policy.

Chapter IV

War Aims, 1916

During 1915 the relations between the government and the Yugoslavs centred on the Balkans while those with the Czechoslovaks and Poles were concerned with the United States. The officials were interested in the nationalities as weapons of war but not in their war aims. Nicolson accurately reflected official opinion when he wrote: 'It is no use our talking of terms of peace until we have brought Germany into the position when she will be forced to accept any terms that we may offer, and it will be a long time before we are able to bring her into that position.'¹

During 1916, despite increased discussion of war aims, the policy of the government on the future of eastern Europe remained the same - the retention of the greatest flexibility for the future formulation of policy by avoidance of open support for any of the basic alternatives and avoidance of all commitments unnecessary to the conduct of the war. As in the case of the Italian negotiations, commitments would be dictated not by theory but by strategic necessity. While government policy remained static, however, the situation was evolving, if not towards commitments, at least towards the reduction of Britain's future alternatives in eastern Europe. During 1916 the relations between the émigrés and the officials continued to develop. Although policy did not change, it was a period in which many of the individuals who might later influence policy began to develop, in some cases under the influence of the émigrés and their work for the

¹ Nicolson to Buchanan, 8 Jan. 1915, F.O. 800-377.

government, their own personal preferences on the question of national self-determination. More significantly, the co-operation between the government and the émigrés, by its success, began to influence the conditions under which the Entente waged war. By adjusting to these newly created conditions according to calculations of strategic necessity, the British government eventually limited to some degree those future alternative courses of action most detrimental to the cause of national self-determination. While the émigrés had no reason, therefore, to rejoice over the nature of British policy, the course of the war seemed to be moving in their favour and forcing the government along with it.

The failure of the Balkan negotiations brought an end to serious consideration or active support of the Yugoslav programme. The negotiations had enabled the Yugoslavs to make extraordinary progress, compared with the Poles and Czechoslovaks, in establishing relations with and presenting their policy to the government. The foreign office had even supported the idea of the creation of some form of Yugoslav state but had been unwilling to pursue the issue in the face of opposition from Serbia and Italy.² That opposition was to remain a constant obstacle preventing the British government from giving any open support to the Yugoslavs. Nevertheless the attitude of the foreign office towards the concept of a Yugoslav state changed very little after the end of the negotiations for, while no support was given to the Yugoslav programme, it remained the dominant preference of the foreign office insofar as it was consistent with the treaty of London which the government fully intended to honour.³ On May 15, 1916, following

² See above, pp. 67-69.

³ Percy minute, 8 Feb. 1916, F.O.371-2804-28967. Drummond to Grey, 3 Mar. 1916, F.O.800-96. Clerk minute, 20 June 1916, F.O.371-2804-117933. Clerk minute, Gaselee to Dormer, 27 June 1916, F.O.395-52-130202. Grey to Rodd, 4 Oct. 1916, F.O.371-2627-199194.

a conversation with Paul Miliukov, a leading Russian Constitutional Democrat, Grey wrote to Buchanan: 'M. Miliukof told me that M. Sazonof wished the Slav element to be retained in Austria to neutralise the German element. I said personally I had favoured the liberation of the Slav element.'⁴

The amount of contact between the Yugoslav Committee and the government declined during 1916 because there were fewer issues of mutual interest after the end of the Balkan negotiations and because the Serbian government pre-empted the position of the Yugoslav Committee in South Slav affairs. The Serbian government established a sphere of influence over Yugoslav affairs which the British government did not challenge. Contact between the Yugoslav Committee and the government was weakened further in June 1916 when Supilo, who had conducted Anglo-Yugoslav relations, resigned from the committee in protest over its subservience to the Serbian government. But throughout 1916 those relations which did exist between the Yugoslavs and the government were cordial although they did not produce significant changes in the already pro-Yugoslav attitudes of the officials.⁵ The Italian government made relations with the Yugoslavs difficult, but it is significant that the foreign office, despite repeated requests from the Italian government, refused to place any limits on Yugoslav propaganda.⁶ For the present nothing could be done until changes in the Balkans made a Yugoslav state possible. If it became possible, it would not be opposed by the British government.

⁴ Grey to Buchanan, 15 May 1916, F.O. 371-2818-93751.

⁵ Bertie to Grey, 22 Mar. 1916, F.O. 371-2615-58909. De Bunsen minute, 3 May 1916, F.O. 371-2615-84528. Bertie to F.O., 5 May 1916, F.O. 371-2258-55031. Seton-Watson to F.O., 10 May 1916, Cab. 37-147-22. Paget minute, 16 June 1916, F.O. 371-2804-117933. Supilo memorandum, 14 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2634-260531. Ostović, Yugoslavia, p. 81.

⁶ Gregory to Drummond, 24 Feb. 1916, F.O. 371-2602-47196. Rodd to Grey, 29 April 1916, F.O. 800-66. Rodd to Grey, 4 Nov. 1916, Cab. 37-159-23-225393. Rodd to Grey, 10 Nov. 1916, Cab. 37-159-49-231670. Drummond to Rodd, 29 Nov. 1916, F.O. 800-66.

The Czechs, without an immediate issue to focus attention on their cause, had much greater difficulty than the Yugoslavs in presenting their views to the foreign office. Few had ever heard of the Czechoslovaks, so that when J.D. Gregory suggested, in March 1915, the creation of Polish and Bohemian states, Drummond could only comment: 'The proposals put forward in the enclosure seem to me somewhat fantastic.'⁷

On May 1, 1915, Masaryk submitted to the foreign office a long and exhaustive essay entitled 'Independent Bohemia'. It was a thorough exposition of the Czechoslovak case dealing with the facts about Czechoslovakia and the reasons favouring its creation. Masaryk proposed the inclusion of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and the Slovak areas of Hungary into a Czechoslovak state, and after listing every possible objection, countered each in turn. He argued that Austria - Hungary was no longer an independent great power but merely a German vassal, so that the creation of a Czechoslovak state, which would be anti-German, would benefit the Entente by weakening Germany. He also maintained that an independent Czechoslovakia, in conjunction with an independent Yugoslavia, would act as an effective barrier to the German drive towards the Near East.⁸

The obvious impossibility of acting on Masaryk's programme in the foreseeable future, combined with what must have appeared in 1915 to be the sheer incredibility of his proposals, dictated a cautious but not

⁷ Drummond minute, Gregory to Drummond, 14 May 1915, F.O. 800-67.

⁸ Seton-Watson, Masaryk, "Independent Bohemia", pp.116-135. De Bunsen minute, 10 April 1915, F.O. 371-2241-58359. Seton-Watson to Clerk, 1 May 1915, F.O. 371-2241-53297. "Independent Bohemia" was distributed to: Robertson, Hankey, Escher, Wilson, Fisher, Hall, Chamberlain, Balfour, Samuel, Bonar Law, Lansdowne, McKenna, Runciman, Crewe, Kerr, Nicolson, Clerk, Percy, Drummond, Paget, Cecil, Hardinge and Spring Rice. Seton-Watson Mss. IV.

hostile reaction from the foreign office. On the file Clerk wrote: 'The Allies have a long way to go before the points in this memo can come up for their practical consideration, but Prof. Masaryk is a recognised leader of Czech political thought and this paper should be borne in mind.'⁹

Nicolson was more sceptical, but not hostile: 'Mr. Masaryk is the leader, if I am not mistaken, of the young Czechs, and can hardly be considered an exponent of the views of the more moderate sections of the Czech party. Still he is an important man.'¹⁰

As might be expected, no action followed, but good relations, encouraged by the foreign office, continued with the Czechs who were by this time co-operating with various branches of the government. Although such co-operation might be expected to have influenced the attitude of the foreign office, and might have done so, there is little evidence of it during 1916. But, at best, time was necessary for such influences to have effect. It is also probable that during this period the full extent of Czech co-operation, related as it was to sensitive issues, was not widely known in the foreign office.

The Czech issue was not seriously discussed again until August 1916, when the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav émigrés requested a letter of support from the prime minister to be read at a public meeting on the anniversary of the outbreak of war. Since the émigrés were planning to pass a resolution proposing the destruction of the Habsburg monarchy, Grey wrote to Masaryk:

I am afraid that the text of the proposed Resolution, ... goes beyond any official pronouncement hitherto made in this or any Allied Country, and the Prime Minister could scarcely

⁹ Clerk minute, 3 May 1915, F.O. 371-2241-53297.

¹⁰ Nicolson minute, 6 May 1915, F.O. 371-2241-53297.

send an official letter on an occasion of this kind which would be tantamount to an endorsement by him of a policy which has not yet been discussed by the Allies. ¹¹

It is an indication of the amicable relations that existed between the foreign office and the Czechs that the idea was rejected, not because of the Czechs, but because, the Yugoslavs being involved, such a letter might offend the Italian government. ¹²

Unlike the Yugoslavs and the Czechs, the Polish nationalists were not united. Among the numerous parties in Poland there were two easily recognizable and antagonistic groups which adhered to quite different policies for the creation of a Polish state and which competed with each other for recognition abroad and support at home. The left wing, which centred around the Polish Socialist party, was led by Józef Pilsudski and was essentially anti-Russian. While neither pro-German nor pro-Austrian, Pilsudski was prepared to undertake limited co-operation with the Central powers against Russia because he believed that the defeat of Russia was necessarily the first step in the liberation of Poland. He gambled that the Central powers would collapse shortly after Russia, thus creating a momentary power vacuum in which a Polish state could be established. Pilsudski's opposition, the Polish right wing, consisted of a conservative coalition of the Realists and the National Democrats under the leadership of Roman Dmowski. He dismissed Pilsudski's idea of the simultaneous defeat of Russia and the Central powers, and he believed that some form of Polish independence could only be achieved in co-operation with the Russian government. Seeing Germany as the greatest threat to the Polish

¹¹ Grey to Masaryk, 10 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-109.

¹² Clerk to Drummond, 10 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-96.

nation, he was therefore prepared to work for the Entente. Although sharply divided in their opinions on Russia, neither Polish group was hostile to Britain or France. In turn, the British government had no reason to assume that Pilsudski was an enemy unless it accepted the unlikely assumption that the enemies of Russia were, by definition, the enemies of Britain.¹³

Wherever there were Poles the political split existed, although in various manifestations. In the United States, the Polish Left adopted a pro-Austrian attitude and created a considerable degree of uneasiness among British officials.¹⁴ These Poles were justifiably considered as enemies of the Entente and treated as such. In contrast, the Polish Right under Smulski and Paderewski established relations with Spring Rice and began to co-operate with the Entente after Horodyski's arrival in the United States. British officials first became aware of this split and its significance for their own interests through developments in America where the action of pro-Austrian Poles cast a suspicion, never shown towards the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks, on all of the Polish émigrés, particularly those of the left wing. This suspicion was not always justified because, while the Polish Right in the United States and the countries of the Entente formed one loosely united coalition, the left-wing Poles in Britain do not appear to have been in contact with their

¹³ A. Bromke, Poland's Politics: Idealism v.s. Realism, Cambridge 1967, p.14. O. Halecki, The Cambridge History of Poland, Cambridge 1951, pp.462-470. T. Komarnicki, Rebirth of the Polish Republic, London 1957, pp.30-141. R. Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, London 1932, pp.39-94. O.S. Pidhaini, The Ukrainian-Polish Problem in the Dissolution of the Russian Empire, 1914-1917, Toronto 1962, pp.26-51.

¹⁴ See above, pp.93-97, 105-110. H.H. Fisher, America and the New Poland, New York 1928, pp.58-59.

American counterparts and could not, therefore, be associated with their action.¹⁵ Contact with the pro-Austrian Poles in the United States or the adoption of a pro-Austrian policy would have discredited the Polish Left in Britain and would have led to internment. But, even in the absence of such contact, the left-wing Poles in Britain were always more vulnerable than their right-wing opponents to charges of being pro-Austrian, thus giving the right-wing a natural advantage, which they did not hesitate to use, in the competition among Polish émigrés for official British support.

At the beginning of the war the Polish Left in Britain, controlling the Polish Information Committee, had the advantage of superior organization not possessed by the right-wing which was represented only by Horodyski and Alma-Tadema. At this time, British officials, unaware of the split and incapable of distinguishing one Polish politician from another, were willing to accept the assistance of Polish émigrés regardless of their political orientation. Horodyski worked for the foreign office while the Polish Information Committee worked with the Metropolitan police and Wellington House.¹⁶ Regardless of being anti-Russian, the committee was prepared to work with the British government, and was initially more successful than its opponents in establishing relations. But this early success was not to go unchallenged once Dmowski's supporters were sufficiently organized.

During 1915 Alma-Tadema began to attack the established position of the Polish Information Committee in the hope of replacing it with her own organization, The Polish Exiles Protection, in dealings with the authorities

¹⁵ Interview with August Zaleski, 13 Aug. 1969.

¹⁶ See above, pp. 24-33, 87-88, 113-115.

on the subject of enemy aliens.¹⁷ Whatever organization was used by the authorities to handle Polish aliens had great power because it could arrange for the release of its supporters and the internment of its opponents. Alma-Tadema was in a strong position and had little difficulty in attacking the committee.¹⁸

In 1914 the home office had only reluctantly accepted the use of the Polish Information Committee and was only too willing to reconsider the arrangements for Polish aliens.¹⁹ The home office prejudice against the committee was never explained, but it may have resulted from the feeling that the committee and its members were not entirely respectable. In contrast, Alma-Tadema had both influential friends, like John Buchan, Arthur Steel-Maitland and Arthur Nicolson, and a social position.²⁰ As a follower of Dmowski, she also had the support of the Russian embassy which alone was enough to turn the scales in her favour. When she approached the home office, she justified the replacement of the committee by accusing its members of accepting bribes and of releasing aliens dangerous to the Entente. She offered no evidence to substantiate these charges, but that did not deter the home office from the immediate resolve to replace the committee with the Polish Exiles Protection.²¹

¹⁷ Sienkiewicz to Repphan, 2 Aug. 1915, H.O. 45-10836-330094. H. Sienkiewicz, the famous Polish novelist and president of the Comité Général du Secours pour les Victimes de la Guerre en Pologne, seems to have initiated the move to replace the Polish Information Committee.

¹⁸ The negotiations between the home office and Alma-Tadema between Sept. 1915 and May 1916 are covered in the home office files (H.O. 45): 10740-262173, 10836-330094, 10836-330095, 10818-317810, and Mepol 2-1635-839801.

¹⁹ See above, p.24.

²⁰ Alma-Tadema to Steel-Maitland, 4 May 1915, Steel-Maitland Ms. GD193-165-2. Buchan to Seton Watson, 28 Aug.1916, Seton-Watson Mss. IV.

²¹ Waller minute, 2 Sept.1915, H.O.45-10837-330095. Pedder minute, 11 Oct. 1915, Waller minute, 12 Nov.1915, H.O.45-10836-330094.

The Metropolitan police, who were working with the committee and who were more particular on the question of evidence, opposed the change. Since Alma-Tadema's accusations were only supported by the testimony of a former member of the committee, Rosco de Bogdanowicz, who the police considered the most disreputable, their refusal to believe these accusations was justified. The police only bowed to the decision of the home office after consulting Wickham Steed and after it was obvious that Alma-Tadema had the support of the Russian embassy.²² By May 1916, the Polish Exiles Protection was the recognized committee for consultation on the release of interned Poles. It was the first victory for Dmowski in his struggle to eliminate his Polish opponents in Britain.

At the request of the home office, Alma-Tadema's accusations led to investigations by Scotland Yard and military intelligence (M.I.5) of the members of the Polish Information Committee.²³ Although no evidence was found, Alma-Tadema had effectively cast a pall of suspicion over the committee and its associates which never completely disappeared. Since the committee was never confronted with these accusations, it had no opportunity to defend itself.

Similar attempts seem to have been made late in 1916 to destroy the relationship between the Polish Information Committee and Wellington House.²⁴ Namier, who had established the connection, was able to thwart this attempt by showing that the committee was only used as an addressing

²² Waller to Henry, 8 Oct. 1915, Henry minute, 26 Oct. 1915, Waller to Thomson, 25 Feb. 1916, Waller to Bigham, 29 May 1916, Henry minute, 17 April 1916, Mepol 2-1635-839801. Waller to Henry, 12 April 1916, H.O. 45-10836-330094.

²³ Curry report (C.I.D.), 7 April 1916, Kell (M.I.5) to Thomson, 9 Jan. 1916, Mepol 2-1635-839801.

²⁴ Montgomery to Gowers, 6 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-231987.

agency and could not possibly be a threat to the work of Wellington House.²⁵ The arrangement was maintained although Wellington House also began to distribute propaganda through the Polish Relief Fund, another of Alma-Tadema's organizations.²⁶

During 1915 and 1916 the foreign office strictly adhered to the position that Poland was a Russian question. The only public statement that showed any British interest in Poland came on March 2, 1915, when Grey expressed, in the house of commons, sympathy with Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich's proclamation to the Poles.²⁷ But when the issue again arose in the House in August 1916, Cecil stated: 'It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to make any recommendation on a matter of internal policy of another State.'²⁸ The government not only maintained a public stance thoroughly consistent with the wishes of the Russian government but also undertook no steps to influence Russian policy. For example, when the foreign office urged the Russians to act on the Polish-American question in the spring of 1915, it made no reference to any possible change in Russia's Polish policy.²⁹ Again in March 1916, when Dmowski urged the foreign office to act on the Polish question, the suggestion was not only completely rejected but also Buchanan was specifically instructed to avoid any discussion of the Polish issue.³⁰ The wisdom of this decision was shown when the French ambassador approached

²⁵ Namier to Gowers, 14 Dec. 1916, Namier to Gowers, 15 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-255781. See also above, pp. 82-84.

²⁶ Wellesley to Buchanan, 30 Dec. 1916, F.O. 395-26-261032.

²⁷ Grey, reply to question in the house of commons, 2 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2445-27478.

²⁸ Parliamentary Debates, Commons, vol. 85, col. 2671, 23 Aug. 1916.

²⁹ See above, pp. 93-97.

³⁰ F.O. to Buchanan, 23 Mar. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-53114.

Sazonov on the subject and only succeeded in provoking a violent outburst of temper.³¹

The British government justifiably refused to jeopardize unnecessarily its relations with an ally as important as Russia. Even if the risk had been slight, which is doubtful, the government would have been irresponsible to accept it while engaged in what appeared to be a war for survival. Grey feared that if provoked on the Polish issue Russia would make peace with the Central powers.³² On August 24, 1916, he wrote that the German government might use the Polish issue to obtain a separate peace with Russia.³³ On November 21, 1916, he wrote: 'For England and France to intervene further [in the Polish question] would be to split with Russia and to destroy all chance of victory by the Allies; ...'³⁴

In spite of official policy, the foreign office always hoped that the Russian government, to win Polish support, would voluntarily modify its Polish policy.³⁵ On May 15, 1915, Grey wrote to Buchanan about his conversation with Miliukov:

I said it was hardly for us to make suggestions about Poland. I hoped Russia would fulfil in a liberal spirit, the proclamation of autonomy that she had issued at the beginning of the war. I was sure there would be disappointment here if that was not done.³⁶

³¹ Lindley to Grey, 19 April 1916, F.O. 800-75. Buchanan to F.O., 26 April 1916, F.O. 371-2747-79517.

³² Bertie diary, 17 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-178. Howard to Hardinge, 6 Oct. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 26.

³³ Grey to Bertie, 24 Aug. 1916, F.O. 371-2804-170012. Hardinge to Howard, 27 Oct. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 26.

³⁴ Grey minute, 21 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-238962.

³⁵ Bertie diary, 30 Oct. 1915, F.O. 800-177. Lindley to Grey, 19 April 1916, F.O. 800-75. Clerk minute, Bertie to Grey, 4 May 1916, F.O. 371-2747-86893. Oliphant minute, Buchanan to Grey, 8 July 1916, F.O. 371-2747-132843. F.O. to Buchanan, 10 July 1916, F.O. 800-75.

³⁶ Grey to Buchanan, 15 May 1916, F.O. 371-2818-93751.

A more liberal Russian policy on Poland might solve the Polish-American problem which perplexed British officials throughout 1915 and 1916.³⁷ It might also thwart the widely rumoured German efforts to win support in Poland and indirectly strengthen the Russian war effort.³⁸ On September 15, 1916, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, who had replaced Nicolson as permanent under-secretary of state, wrote:

It is so unfortunate that the Russians are so blind to their own interests that they are doing absolutely nothing at present to conciliate Polish opinion, which, in spite of the inborn hatred of Germany in Poland, is slowly but steadily veering round to Germany.³⁹

Despite the very real and sincere desire in the foreign office for changes in Russian policy, there was nothing that could be done. But to offset the danger of losing Polish support inherent in that policy, the foreign office promoted relations with the Polish émigrés within the limits allowed by the attitude of the Russian government but without its support. From the very beginning of the war the foreign office and its diplomatic officials had been approached by numerous, often insignificant, Polish émigrés, but close relations had not been established with any particular faction.⁴⁰ The warnings of Alma-Tadema in September 1914 had created a suspicion in the foreign office about the Polish Information Committee which prevented it from establishing a pre-eminent position as

³⁷ See above, pp. 93-97, 105-110.

³⁸ Grant Duff to de Bunsen, 7 Sept. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-177705. War committee, 7 Nov. 1916, Cab. 42-23-9. Bertie to F.O., 4 May 1916, F.O. 371-2747-86893. F.O. to Buchanan, 10 July 1916, F.O. 800-75. F. Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War, London 1967, pp. 120-141, 245.

³⁹ Hardinge to Bertie, 15 Sept. 1916, F.O. 800-178.

⁴⁰ Grant Duff to F.O., 20 Dec. 1914, F.O. 371-2095-84889. Grant Duff to Grey, 25 Jan. 1915, F.O. 371-2445-11258. A. Staniszewski to F.O., 8 April 1915, F.O. 371-2445-40846. J. de Lipkowski to F.O., 5 July 1915, F.O. 371-2445-89634.

it had done with the home office.⁴¹

On March 3, 1915, August Zaleski, Pilsudski's representative and a member of the Polish Progressive party, arrived in Britain to assume the leadership of the left wing Poles. Zaleski was a close friend of Namier with whom he had been a student at the London School of Economics and Political Science and, through contacts with Seton-Watson and Burrows, he was, to some extent, assimilated into that group of émigrés and academics, centred around Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed, who worked for national self-determination.⁴² On March 23, 1915, Zaleski explained Pilsudski's programme to Drummond and submitted to the foreign office a memorandum which explained that, while not anti-British, Pilsudski was anti-Russian and was working for the complete independence of Poland.⁴³ Zaleski received little attention and was denied the facilities, which he had requested, to travel to Switzerland.⁴⁴ The foreign office was not hostile to Zaleski, but there seemed to be no immediate advantage in assisting him. According to Percy: 'He is probably not entitled to more consideration than a host of other Poles.'⁴⁵ The most significant aspect of this brief encounter was that Zaleski's obvious anti-Russian bias caused neither comment nor opposition.

In November 1915 Dmowski arrived in London seeking British and French support.⁴⁶ He had attempted through the Russian government to find a

⁴¹ See above, p. 32.

⁴² Interview with August Zaleski, 13 Aug. 1969. Interview with Lady Namier, 25 Aug. 1969. During the war Zaleski taught Polish at King's College, The Strand, and contributed to Seton-Watson's periodical, The New Europe.

⁴³ Drummond minute, 23 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2445-34420.

⁴⁴ Drummond minute, 27 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2445-35952. According to Zaleski the facilities were, in fact, given. Interview, 13 Aug. 1969.

⁴⁵ Percy minute, 31 Mar. 1915, F.O. 371-2445-35952.

⁴⁶ Komarnicki, Rebirth, pp.48-49.

solution to the Polish problem such as autonomy within the Russian empire. Now disillusioned with Russia, he sought the internationalization of the Polish issue which he hoped would lead not to autonomy but to independence.⁴⁷ Opinion in the foreign office on Dmowski was divided. On December 7, 1915, Percy commented:

It would, I think, be well if we kept clear as far as possible of Mr. Dmowski who is hanging about London. I do not know him and I do not know what his "game" is, but I do know that he has been informing all the Poles in London that he is in the confidence of the F.O. and has been helping us to draft our "notes to Germany about the relief of the population of Russian Poland".⁴⁸

In the foreign office Percy tended to be a spokesman for Namier, who was to be Dmowski's most determined antagonist, and this minute may have reflected Namier's opinion.⁴⁹ Nicolson, who had known Dmowski in St. Petersburg and probably preferred him to other Polish émigrés because he appeared pro-Russian, reacted strongly to this minute by writing a defence of Dmowski who, he claimed, was an exception among Polish politicians.⁵⁰ Percy remained unconvinced, but Nicolson's friendship ensured Dmowski access to the foreign office.⁵¹

Dmowski had an advantage over other Polish émigrés in that, as the leader of the Polish members of the second Duma, he was a recognized political leader representing a considerable segment of Polish opinion.

⁴⁷ Gregory, "Notes Obtained From a Reliable Source with Regard to the Polish Conference at Lausanne", 20 Mar. 1916, "The Polish Case for Internationalisation of the Polish Question", 23 Mar. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-63471. The reliable sources were almost certainly National Democrats or other conservatives allied to Dmowski with whom Gregory had contact. Dmowski seemed to be moving towards a more radical independence policy although he played it down in order not to upset Russia and its allies.

⁴⁸ Percy minute, 7 Dec. 1915, F.O. 371-2510-187184.

⁴⁹ See above, pp. 93-95.

⁵⁰ Nicolson minute, 10 Dec. 1915, F.O. 371-2510-187184.

⁵¹ Percy minute, Nicolson minute, 17 Dec. 1915, F.O. 371-2449-193104.

He could not be dismissed as Zaleski and others had been. Although he was becoming more anti-Russian, a fact probably not fully appreciated by the foreign office, he appeared to be, as the leader of the pro-Russian faction, the safest émigré with whom the British government could deal.⁵² In March 1916, Dmowski submitted a memorandum to the foreign office recommending the internationalization of the Polish problem. He was careful to avoid the difficult question of the future structure of Poland but appears to have made verbal references to a Poland sufficiently independent to have its own king and army. Unlike other Polish memoranda, it was read by most of the members of the war department and even sent to Lord Lansdowne, a member of the cabinet.⁵³ Contrary to Dmowski's hopes, no action was taken in Petrograd, but when Grey instructed Nicolson to consult Benckendorff on the Polish problem, he was undertaking more action than had been inspired by any previous Polish memorandum.⁵⁴

In March 1916, a conference of Polish émigrés in Lausanne, attended by Dmowski, decided unanimously to work for the internationalization of the Polish issue.⁵⁵ As a result of Dmowski's activities during this

⁵² Dmowski seems to have been cautious about mentioning independence to British officials. In his written submissions to the foreign office the plans for the future structure of Poland are vague although he seems to have spoken on occasion to some officials about independence. It is significant that Nicolson, who always supported Dmowski, did not support the idea of independence but only autonomy. O'Beirne minute, 22 Mar. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-53414.

⁵³ Dmowski memorandum, 21 Mar. 1916, Dmowski to Cecil, 11 Mar. 1916, Lansdowne to Cecil, 18 Mar. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-53414. A. Dallin, 'The Future of Poland', Russian Diplomacy and Eastern Europe, 1914-1917, New York 1963, p.37.

⁵⁴ F.O. to Buchanan, 23 Mar. 1916, Grey minute, 22 Mar. 1916, Nicolson minute, 24 Mar. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-53414.

⁵⁵ See above, footnote 47.

conference, Namier stated in a press summary for Wellington House that Dmowski had become pro-Austrian and had abandoned his former principles. In these press summaries, Namier freely expressed his personal opinions both on the Polish émigrés and the attitude the government should adopt towards them. These opinions were pro-Russian and were entirely consistent with the British policy that Poland was an internal Russian problem beyond the scope of British foreign policy. By discussing matters of foreign policy in his press summaries, Namier obviously went beyond the limited prerogatives of his own rather unimportant office. But in the past his advice had been sound and had been of value to the government because he was pre-eminent among the officials for his knowledge of Poland.⁵⁶ On this occasion, however, he went too far.

Someone in the government showed the report to Dmowski who immediately sought the support of Nicolson against Namier.⁵⁷ Nicolson protested in writing to Grey and added: 'I hear that M. Namier is employed at Wellington House, I remember Miss Alma-Tadema warned me about him. And I believe Mr. Gregory's Austrian Polish friend [Horodyski] has no high opinion of him'.⁵⁸ Dmowski, Horodyski and Alma-Tadema had good reason to dislike Namier, who reciprocated in kind. On May 31, 1916, he wrote: 'Polish politicians in general incline towards being unbalanced and are easily swayed, and their politics are frequently tortuous and dangerous;...'⁵⁹ It is incredible, however, that Nicolson accepted without question these accusations against

⁵⁶ See above, pp. 93-95.

⁵⁷ A copy of the press summary cannot be located. The leak might have come from Gregory who was the most pro-Polish.

⁵⁸ Nicolson to Grey, 6 May 1916, F.O. 395-25-95630.

⁵⁹ Namier, 'Observations on Polish Activities in America', 31 May 1916, F.O. 395-10-106874.

a government official despite their obvious bias. The result was that Namier was warned to restrict himself in future to strict press summaries.⁶⁰ But if Dmowski thought that he had eliminated his 'Polish Austrian Jewish' antagonist, he was very much mistaken. In fact Dmowski had made an enemy who was particularly dangerous because of his intelligence, his pugnacity and his determination.

A similar incident showed the influence Dmowski's supporters could have over British officials. In May 1916, Clerk was approached by Rettinger, an independent, who had been the first Polish émigré to contact the foreign office in 1914.⁶¹ His proposal that Britain and France should finance a Polish resistance movement in Austria went far beyond anything yet considered by the government and therefore had little chance of acceptance.⁶² But it was not immediately rejected even though Nicolson wrote:

Our attitude is to consider the future of Poland chiefly a Russian question; and I would deprecate any encouragement to the numerous Polish emissaries who are wandering about with cut and dried schemes of their own. I understand that Dr. Rettinger is of small account among Poles.⁶³

Clerk, who had no particular bias on the Polish question but was sympathetic to national self-determination, seemed somewhat interested in the idea. A decision on the proposal was still pending when, on June 12, 1916, Drummond wrote the following minute:

Count Horodyski spoke to me yesterday with regard to M.M. Nemir [sic], Zaleski and Retinger [sic]. He said that he thought that these three gentlemen were, perhaps unwittingly, being used for pro-Austrian purposes and he urged that their correspondence

⁶⁰ Montgomery minute, 19 May 1916, F.O. 395-25-95630.

⁶¹ Clerk memo. on Rettinger, 25 May 1916, F.O. 371-2747-98112.

⁶² Clerk minute, 1 June 1916, F.O. 371-2747-119621. Rettinger to F.O., 17 July 1916, F.O. 371-2747-138666.

⁶³ Nicolson minute, 3 June 1916, F.O. 371-2747-119621.

should be closely watched and that it was desirable that they should not be allowed to travel about but should be confined to this country.⁶⁴

Horodyski, in supplying no evidence for this accusation, was following Alma-Tadema's tactics of slander recently used with considerable success on the home office.⁶⁵ In Namier's case, as a British subject, it was virtually an accusation of treason. Like Nicolson in the previous incident, Drummond accepted the truth of these accusations without question and without the slightest consideration that Horodyski might have some ulterior motive in slandering his opponents. On June 14, 1916, the foreign office informed M.I.5 of the accusation against Zaleski, Rettinger and Namier, and although an investigation followed, the results were inconclusive. Drummond also informed Cecil and added: 'I do not like the way M. Namier is always trying to have a hit at M. Dmowski who I believe to be entirely reliable and a strong pro-Ally.' Cecil agreed but added: 'All the same Dmowski is rather too clever for my taste.'⁶⁶

Horodyski's accusation discredited Rettinger and destroyed any chance that his proposal might be accepted.⁶⁷ To avoid alienating Rettinger, the foreign office did not actually reject the proposal but only gave a polite, non-committal reply.⁶⁸ The same sequence was re-enacted in December 1916 when Rettinger again approached a British official. On this occasion, Drummond issued instructions that all relations with him were to be dropped.⁶⁹ This incident shows the degree of influence

⁶⁴ Drummond minute, 12 June 1916, F.O.800-96. Also see above, pp.87-88, 113-115.

⁶⁵ See above, pp.124-126.

⁶⁶ Bray, 'Report on August Zaleski', 20 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-216797. Drummond to Cecil, Cecil minute, 15 June 1916, F.O. 800-96.

⁶⁷ Drummond minute, 21 June 1916, F.O. 371-2747-119621.

⁶⁸ Grey to Buchanan, 22 July 1916, F.O. 371-2747-138666.

⁶⁹ Drummond to Rumbold, 23 Dec. 1916, F.O. 800-197.

acquired by Horodyski through his work for the foreign office and the complete willingness of some members of the foreign office, because he had proven his loyalty, to accept his views without any critical analysis.

Although Nicolson, Drummond and Gregory supported Dmowski, Percy remained in opposition. On July 5, 1916, he wrote to Clerk:

There are two opinions about Dmowski - one that with him and the pro-Russian party lies all hope for Poland - the other that he is a self-seeking politician surrounded by all that is least efficient, least trustworthy and most effete in Poland. Officially the first attitude is the only one we can adopt, but as it isn't a very sound one, probably, it seems best that we shouldn't adopt any attitude at all. ⁷⁰

In this dispute, although he might have been tempted to agree with Percy, Clerk remained neutral. Although continuing to defend Namier against the attacks of other officials, Percy could not, as a minor official, effectively oppose those who supported Dmowski.⁷¹ Power among the permanent officials obviously rested with Dmowski's supporters.

The Namier-Dmowski feud arose again in June 1916 when the Russian government, to discredit Dmowski, published a report of his activities in Lausanne containing accusations similar to those made by Namier. On June 30, 1916, the Polish Club in Russia, probably at Dmowski's instigation, published a refutation of these accusations which stated: 'The author of accusations against R. Dmowski ... is a certain Namier, who has recently been unmasked in London by the British Government authorities'.⁷² The secrecy surrounding Namier, as an employee of Wellington House, must have given Dmowski the false impression that he had actually eliminated his

⁷⁰ Percy to Clerk, 5 July 1916, F.O. 395-26-131839.

⁷¹ Gregory minute, 21 Aug. 1916, Percy minute, 29 Aug. 1916, F.O. 395-10-162422.

⁷² F.O. (Drummond) to Buchanan, 23 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-75.

antagonist. On August 23, 1916, in response to this attack on Namier, Drummond wrote Buchanan:

We naturally do not want to identify ourselves with anything hostile to Dmowski or take sides in these Polish squabbles at all but as Namier wrote what he did write with the sanction of his immediate official superior it seems fair that he should be protected as far as possible.

Drummond seems to have adopted, for no apparent reason, a more objective attitude towards the Namier-Dmowski feud. The following statements had been deleted from the final draft of the despatch:

Long before this time Dmowski had tried to throw suspicion on Namier and he appears, for a variety of reasons, to have his knife into him.... We have no doubts as to Namier and his information has been very useful to us in many ways. The feud between him and Dmowski is probably due to a question of "Semiticism" ... 73

While Namier's attacks on Dmowski were based on reasons of foreign policy, he might have been influenced by Dmowski's open and rabid anti-semitism.⁷⁴ When Buchanan replied that a Galician Jew was a very unsuitable person to advise on Polish policy because the Jews in that area were notoriously pro-Austrian, Drummond merely dropped the issue. By this time Percy had convinced him that Namier's views were perfectly consistent with official British policy.⁷⁵

These episodes, in a dispute which was to continue until the end of the war, showed the influence acquired by the National Democrats over the foreign office. Dmowski and Alma-Tadema had influence over Nicolson who, like Grey, preferred the idea of a united, autonomous Poland within Russia but would not have gone further and would certainly not favour an anti-Russian Polish policy. Horodyski, because of his services, had influence

⁷³ F.O. (Drummond) to Buchanan, 23 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-75.

⁷⁴ Rose, Polish Democracy, p.76. Machray, Poland, p.75.

⁷⁵ Drummond minute, Buchanan to Drummond, 29 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-75.

over Drummond and Gregory who were the strongest Polish advocates in the foreign office and who probably preferred complete independence. Both Drummond and Gregory were Catholic and, although in Drummond's case it is uncertain, there can be no doubt that Gregory, nicknamed the Jesuit, saw the Poles as the defenders of Catholicism against Russian Orthodoxy.⁷⁶ Namier thought that the Poles were useful for propaganda but that relations with the émigrés were inconsistent with official policy. Unlike Nicolson, who favoured Dmowski above other émigrés because he appeared pro-Russian, Namier was aware that Dmowski was moving towards a more radical independence policy which made him, in terms of British policy towards Russia, no different than the other émigrés. Because he had only the support of Percy, who could scarcely challenge Drummond and Nicolson, he could not change the dominant trend in the foreign office. His position was also weak because the secrecy of Wellington House tended to reduce his official status and his Jewish origins cast doubt on his expertise.⁷⁷ During 1916, the National Democrats became the major Polish influence on the foreign office. At the same time, a National Democratic organization replaced the Polish Information Committee as the recognized authority on Polish aliens. Ruthless and unscrupulous tactics had proven successful. On November 30, 1916, Seton-Watson, who preferred Zaleski to Dmowski, wrote:

⁷⁶ Gregory to Drummond, 11 May 1915, F.O. 371-2445-61430.

⁷⁷ Toynbee wrote of Namier's period at Oxford: '... most of Bernstein's Namier and my contemporaries at Balliol persisted in their state of invincible ignorance about Eastern Europe till they were overtaken by the outbreak of war in August 1914. They failed to profit by the opportunity of learning about Bernstein's world at first hand from Bernstein himself because they were allergic to him and therefore to his homeland. They did not take him seriously, and they therefore could not recognize that his world, too, was real.' p.64, Acquaintances. One must suspect that had he been a native of Britain rather than Galicia he would have been taken more seriously, as was Seton-Watson.

the Russophil Poles here - I won't mention names - have been engaged for over a year on a whole series of extremely under-hand intrigues against our people ... they affect King's College [where Zaleski taught Polish], the F.O. and our propaganda in neutral countries. ⁷⁸

Dmowski had established influence over the foreign office while opposing the established policy of the government by proposing the internationalization of the Polish issue. Namier lost influence and was even accused of treason by consistently supporting the official British policy that Poland was an internal Russian question. Nothing shows more clearly the divergence between official policy and the personal preferences of the pro-Polish officials like Drummond, Gregory and Nicolson. While the government refused to support the internationalization of the Polish issue, the dominant preference of the foreign office varied between a united, autonomous Poland within Russia to the more radical policy of Polish independence.

During the summer of 1916, the British government for the first time, seriously considered the problem of war aims. The discussion of these aims was prompted by two aspects of the general strategic situation. During the spring of 1916, the belief was widespread in the government, based on numerous reports, that President Wilson would attempt to mediate in the European conflict. Before the government could respond to such an initiative, some formulation of aims was necessary. In addition, the military prospects of the Entente in the spring and summer of 1916, based on the Somme offensive, the Brusilov offensive and the Rumanian entry into the war, created a general but shortlived feeling of optimism conducive to the study of war aims. Under these general conditions, the impetus to

⁷⁸ Seton-Watson to Allison Phillips, 30 Nov. 1916, Seton-Watson Mss. III.

discuss these aims apparently developed simultaneously but separately in various branches of the government.⁷⁹

Since the beginning of the war, the foreign office, under the influence of Nicolson, had avoided any systematic study or discussion of war aims.⁸⁰ Hardinge, who replaced Nicolson in June 1916, reversed this policy. He established a committee, under Sir William Tyrrell, a senior clerk, and Sir Ralph Paget, an assistant under-secretary, to undertake a thorough review of possible war aims.⁸¹ Excluding the text of the final report, there is no evidence on the structure of the committee, the documents it used or how it reached its conclusions. In some cases, however, the original but not immediate sources of the recommendations are obvious because of their uniqueness. Unfortunately the process by which these ideas reached the committee cannot always be determined. The report was not a statement of policy but merely a series of recommendations which tended to reflect the dominant preferences within the foreign office. Its treatment of eastern Europe indicated the degree of progress achieved by the émigrés.

The report, completed by August 7, 1916, stated that the recommendations were based on the principle of nationality as enunciated by members of the government in 1914.⁸² It would be applied subject to economic factors, treaty obligations, Allied war aims and, above all, British

⁷⁹ War committee, 21 Mar. 1916, Cab.42-11-6. P. Guinn, British Strategy and Politics, 1914 to 1918, Oxford 1965, pp.121-191.

⁸⁰ See above, p. 15.

⁸¹ Hardinge to Chirol, 9 Aug. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 24. Paget to Findlay, 2 Oct. 1916, Paget Mss. 51256.

⁸² Paget and Tyrrell, 'Suggested Basis for a Territorial Settlement in Europe', 7 Aug. 1916, Cab.24-2-78.

interests. These exceptions were so extensive as to allow for almost any application of the general principle; but at least in that sense the statement was consistent with Asquith's speeches at the beginning of the war. In stating elsewhere in the report that the 'Allies who went to war for the emancipation of nationalities will inevitably be called upon to deal with the Polish question', Paget and Tyrrell showed that they had adopted, through a strong bias in favour of national self-determination, an interpretation of Asquith's early speeches which went far beyond anything that he had intended.⁸³

The authors recommended, in accordance with the principle of nationality, that the Habsburg empire should be destroyed. They based this proposal on Masaryk's and Supilo's argument that Austria-Hungary was and, if it survived, would remain subject to Germany regardless of the outcome of the war.⁸⁴ To weaken Germany, Austria-Hungary had to be eliminated. In place of the Empire, they first recommended the creation of a Yugoslav state. Since they deplored the violations of the principle of nationality in the treaty of London, they hoped that it might be voluntarily modified by the Italians. If the Italians refused, Paget and Tyrrell recognized the necessity of fulfilling the obligations of the treaty, but they maintained that a Yugoslav state could still be formed from territories not covered by the treaty. This state, which the government should support, was to be 'a free and voluntary union, not imposed from without implying subjection of any one portion to the other'. Since it was to include Serbia, Paget and Tyrrell were rejecting the concept of a Greater Serbia in favour of Supilo's concept of a federal union of South Slavs.

⁸³ See above, pp. 17-19.

⁸⁴ See above, pp. 35-36, 120-121.

They also opposed the resurrection of Montenegro and, in opposition to Italian policy, the leaving of Croatia to Hungary.⁸⁵ On a question in which there were almost an infinite number of variations, the authors positively rejected the Serbian, Italian and Montenegrin solutions in favour of a proposal which in all essentials was identical to Supilo's Yugoslav programme. They even used Supilo's argument:

We consider that Great Britain should in every way encourage and promote the union of Serbia, Montenegro and the Southern Slavs into one strong federation of states with a view to its forming a barrier to any German advance towards the East.⁸⁶

It was assumed that such a state, supported by Britain, would be pro-British. Although the proposal represented the strongest endorsement ever given to the Yugoslav position by any British official and, in contrast to similar proposals during the Balkan negotiations, was made regardless of any current negotiations, all of the evidence suggests that it reflected the dominant preference within the foreign office.⁸⁷

The proposals in the report on the future of Czechoslovakia bore no resemblance to any Czechoslovak programme. Paget and Tyrrell considered

⁸⁵ See above, p. 56. There can be no doubt that the foreign office in general shared the opinion that Montenegro should cease to exist. King Nikita of Montenegro was suspected of treachery during the Balkan campaign in 1915 and considered by the foreign office unworthy of consideration. In September 1916 Grey wrote: 'There is no occasion for our authorities to put themselves out to please the King of Montenegro who tried to sell the allied cause as far as Montenegro was concerned to the Austrians.' (Bertie to Hardinge, 7 Sept. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 25). The Montenegrin government was still recognized and, to some extent, financially supported by the British government but only because the French and Italian governments were doing likewise. In contrast to their attitude towards the Yugoslavs the British were unlikely, should an opportunity arise, to give assistance to the Montenegrins. Grey to Bertie, 13 Sept. 1915, F.O. 371-2268-127443. Hardinge to Rodd, 4 Oct. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 26.

⁸⁶ See above, pp. 35-36, 42.

⁸⁷ See above, pp. 118-120.

the possibility of an independent Bohemia, but in listing the various alternatives did not include Masaryk's idea of a state consisting of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and the Slovak areas of Hungary. Since this was an essential point in Masaryk's programme, it can only be assumed that the authors did not consult the memoranda, like 'Independent Bohemia', which Masaryk had submitted to the foreign office.⁸⁸ After listing the various alternatives, which showed a slight knowledge of Czechoslovak views, they proposed that Bohemia should be attached to an independent Polish state: 'As far as we understand, this solution is desired both by far-seeing Czechs and Poles.... The Czechs fully appreciate that they would benefit by the superior culture and civilization of the Poles.'

This astounding proposal certainly did not come from Czech sources. It is difficult to imagine where Paget and Tyrrell found the far-seeing Czechs they claim to have consulted; for there is no evidence that any of the Czechs ever considered or suggested union with Poland. The Czechs were not about to trade Austrian for Polish rule, particularly since the Poles in Austria-Hungary had, prior to 1914, supported the status quo in opposition to the Czechs and South Slavs.⁸⁹ Nor would the Czechs agree with the authors on 'the superior culture and civilization of the Poles.' Since the proposal never appeared in any previous foreign office document, it is impossible to determine its origin. There is also no reason to assume that it reflected the opinion of those officials, like Clerk, who were very close to the Czechs and their supporters. It did, however, reflect the lack of any dominant preference in the foreign office on this

⁸⁸ See above, pp.120-121. A copy had been sent to Paget.

⁸⁹ A.J.P. Taylor, The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918, New York 1965, pp.203-204.

issue as well as the inability of many of the officials to conceive of a reasonable solution to the Czechoslovak problem. While the Yugoslavs had succeeded in convincing the foreign office, the Czechs had as yet failed, despite the fact that during this period they were, in co-operation with other branches of the government, making a greater contribution to the Entente than either of the other nationalities. Robert Cecil later claimed that he first heard of Czechoslovakia only in December 1916.⁹⁰

On Poland, the report rejected both total absorption by Russia and autonomy within Russia. It proposed the establishment of an independent and sovereign kingdom of Poland to be ruled by a Russian Grand Duke but in no other way connected to the Russian state. The authors did not deny the difficulties involved in this proposal, but they speculated that at the end of the war Russia might need Allied assistance in freeing its territory from German occupation. In this event Britain and France would be able to intervene in the Polish question in favour of an independent kingdom. By decreasing the power of both Germany and Russia and by acting as a buffer state between these two powers, an independent Poland would be in the best interests of Britain. In March 1916, after consulting various Polish émigrés, Gregory had made the same proposal using the same justification, claiming that it was the solution most preferred by the Poles.⁹¹ Since he was a close friend of Horodyski and a supporter of Dmowski, the émigrés he consulted were undoubtedly National Democrats. Paget and Tyrrell probably based their recommendation on this report which, in turn, was based on Dmowski's policy. While Gregory would have supported the recommendation, it was probably too radical for others, like Gray and

⁹⁰ R. Cecil, All the Way, London 1949, p.141.

⁹¹ See above, p.131, fn.47.

Nicolson, who seemed to prefer Dmowski's earlier programme of a united, autonomous Poland within the Russian empire.⁹²

The sections of the Paget-Tyrrell memorandum on eastern Europe were an exposition on the practical application of national self-determination. It was based on the belief, constantly expounded by the *émigrés*, that national self-determination would be in the interests of Britain because the newly created states would be pro-British. The willingness of the *émigrés* to co-operate with the government in the conduct of the war gave substance to this belief. When the report was submitted to the foreign office in September 1916, Hardinge wrote: 'This is an interesting report requiring a good deal of digestion.... It seems premature at present to express any decided opinion'.⁹³ Although he did not express his opinion on national self-determination, it seems, from other sources, that he agreed with the report.⁹⁴ Drummond, Clerk and Percy, while possibly having reservations on specific points, undoubtedly approved of the support expressed by the authors for the nationalities.

Grey's opinion is always hard to determine because of the lack of evidence. His only comment on the report - 'It seems to me to be very ably done' - gives little indication of his views. But his promises to Supilo and his conversation with Miliukov show that the report's emphasis on national self-determination reflected his own personal preference for

⁹² See above, pp.137-139.

⁹³ Hardinge minute, Paget-Tyrrell memorandum, 11 Sept. 1916, F.O.371-2804-180510.

⁹⁴ Paget to Findlay, 2 Oct. 1916, Paget Mss. 51256. Seton-Watson conversation with Hardinge, 25 July 1916, Seton-Watson Mss. VI. Bertie diary, 11 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-171.

the future of Europe.⁹⁵ But Grey was responsible for the policy on war aims that commitments unnecessary to the conduct of the war were to be avoided in order to preserve the greatest freedom of action. It was unlikely, therefore, regardless of his own preferences and those of his officials, that he would do more than agree that such recommendations were theoretically desirable. During 1916, Grey was sufficiently interested in the possibility of a negotiated peace attained through American mediation that he would never make negotiations impossible by the adoption of extreme war aims.⁹⁶

Most members of the foreign office would agree with Grey that these recommendations, while desirable in principle, were completely impractical in the present political context. The exception was Cecil who, unlike the others, had absolutely no sympathy for nationalism and who could be expected to oppose such recommendations on both a theoretical and practical basis. In December 1916, he wrote: 'Nationalism whether Irish or Slav arouses all the worst passions of my nature'.⁹⁷ Many of the Paget-Tyrrell recommendations had been made before but had been rejected as unfeasible because of inter-allied relations. The situation had not changed. The

⁹⁵ Grey minute, Paget-Tyrrell memorandum, 11 Sept. 1916, F.O. 371-2804-180510. Also see above, pp. 50-51, 56, 59-60, 119, 128. At times Grey seems to have accepted the idea that Austria-Hungary was no longer an independent great power, Grey to Laughlin, 7 Aug. 1916, F.O. 115-2130-230.

⁹⁶ Bertie diary, 11 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-171. Bertie diary, 15 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-175. Grey to Lloyd George, 29 Sept. 1916, Lloyd George Ms. E2-13-5. Bertie to Hardinge, 24 Aug. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 24. Hardinge to Bertie, 4 Oct. 1916, Hardinge to Bertie, 10 Oct. 1916, F.O. 800-172. Bertie to Hardinge, 16 Oct. 1916, F.O. 800-178. Bertie and Hardinge may have exaggerated Grey's interest in a negotiated peace but it was a possibility which certainly disturbed them.

⁹⁷ Cecil minute, Drummond to Cecil, 23 Dec. 1916, F.O. 371-2634-260531. Cecil, 'Principles of Foreign Policy', undated, Cecil Mss. 51195. Cecil seems to have had little influence in the foreign office before December 1916.

preferences of the foreign office and the personal views of officials on hypothetical questions neither reflected nor as yet influenced actual policy. No one in the foreign office seriously suggested the immediate incorporation of these proposals into British foreign policy. When the memorandum was sent to the cabinet, it was sent as a suggested basis for future not immediate policy.

On August 10, 1916, the war committee discussed the possibility of formulating armistice terms in preparation for any attempt at mediation.⁹⁸

On August 17, 1916, Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, the chief of the imperial general staff, wrote to Lloyd George, the secretary of state for war, expressing his belief in the need for a discussion of war aims.

Robertson feared that the French, with their war aims carefully formulated, would be able, in the event of negotiations, to seize the initiative to the detriment of British interests:

We may be sure that M. Briand [premier of France] will have very decided views, carefully worked out for him under his general direction by the clever people who surround him and who do not appear on the surface of political life.⁹⁹

Robertson seemed aware of the Paget-Tyrrell committee, but it is unlikely that he was aware of their report which had not yet been submitted to the foreign office. With the letter he enclosed his own memorandum on war aims which was the antithesis of the Paget-Tyrrell report in that

⁹⁸ War committee, 10 Aug. 1916, Cab. 42-17-5.

⁹⁹ Robertson to Lloyd George, 17 Aug. 1916, W.O. 106-1510. Robertson's fears about Briand may have come from Viscount Esher who had considerable influence in the war office for whom he acted as an 'observer' in Paris. On August 11, 1916 he expressed similar fears in his diary in almost identical terms. Viscount Esher, Letters and Journals, vol. IV, London 1938, pp.47-48.

it emphasised the balance of power instead of the nationality principle.¹⁰⁰ Robertson neither mentioned national self-determination nor showed the slightest concern for subject nationalities. He proposed the maintenance of a diminished Austria-Hungary including Bohemia and Moravia which, he believed, could not be independent. He recognized the necessity of accepting Russian policy in Poland and supported the Greater Serbian concept by proposing to give Serbia Bosnia, Herzegovina and Slavonia. For the émigrés, nothing could be worse than these proposals except the victory of the Central powers.

At one point in the memorandum Robertson stated: 'Of far greater import to the matter under immediate consideration is the intention to break up Austria-Hungary'. He came to this conclusion after examining the promises of Habsburg territory to Serbia, Italy and Rumania. The decision had never been made and the intention never expressed, but in view of the territorial promises it was not an unreasonable assumption. But it was an assumption which showed that confusion existed within the government on the nature of foreign policy.

At a meeting of the war committee on August 30, 1916, Asquith asked the members of the cabinet to submit their views on war aims. His statement that 'Everything indicated that M. Briand considered that we should be face to face with this question before the end of the autumn' creates the suspicion that the impetus for Asquith's request came from Robertson.¹⁰¹ As a result of this request, the Robertson and Paget-Tyrrrell memoranda

¹⁰⁰ Robertson, 'General Staff Memorandum Submitted in Accordance With the Prime Minister's Instructions', 31 Aug. 1916, Cab. 29-1-4.

¹⁰¹ War committee, 30 Aug. 1916, Cab. 42-18.

were submitted to the war committee and they were followed, in October 1916, by another memorandum by Arthur James Balfour, the first lord of the admiralty. In January, he had written: 'If the map of Europe was brought by the present war into close harmony with the distribution of nationalities, one perennial cause of international disturbance would be mitigated.'¹⁰² In his appreciation of nationalism, Balfour was an exception among his Conservative colleagues who, because of the Irish problem, abhorred nationalism in any form.¹⁰³ In a paper submitted to the cabinet in May 1899, on the South African question, Balfour had written:

were I a Boer ... nothing but necessity would induce me to adopt a constitution which would turn my country into an English Republic or a system of education which would reduce my language to the "patois" of a small and helpless minority.¹⁰⁴

Balfour was not a nationalist, but he had a sympathy for subject nationalities which was the product of his remarkable ability for real understanding of the many sides of any question. He could appreciate the feelings which motivated the émigrés, and he understood very clearly the importance of nationalism in European affairs.

In his memorandum, Balfour recognized both the necessity to solve some of the European nationality problems and the possibility that the

¹⁰² Balfour, 'Irresponsible Reflections on the Part which the Pacific Nations Might Play in Discouraging Future Wars', 19 Jan. 1916, Cab. 37-141-11.

¹⁰³ In discussions of nationalism in eastern Europe Ireland was seldom mentioned. The similarities may have been too obvious to merit comment but they were undoubtedly apparent to those who considered the problem of national self-determination. The problem of Ireland obviously made it difficult for the government to approach the Russians on the Polish issue. When action on behalf of Finland was suggested Crewe wrote, 'We might get in return some good advice how to deal with Sein Fein'. Clerk to Nicolson, 27 April 1916, F.O.371-2825-80250.

¹⁰⁴ D. Judd, Balfour and the British Empire, London 1968, p.165, Cab.37-49-29. Also see A.J. Balfour, Opinions and Argument, London, pp.88-89. A.J. Balfour, 'Race and Nationality', The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, Session 1908-1909, London 1910, p.240.

nationality principle could be used to achieve the Entente's cardinal aim of the weakening of Germany.¹⁰⁵ As a convenient principle upon which to base the territorial reduction of the Central powers, national self-determination was more a means than an end. Balfour opposed the creation of an independent Poland, rejecting the Paget-Tyrrell proposal, because he feared that it would succumb to the same weakness that had led to the partitions. He doubted its effectiveness as a buffer state which, in any case, would not be in the interests of Britain because it would relieve Germany of Russian pressure. Instead he favoured, as did many in the foreign office, a re-united autonomous Poland within the Russian empire. He disliked the idea of the German sections of Austria joining Germany and therefore desired to see the continued existence of the Dual monarchy shorn of its Italian, Rumanian and South Slav possessions. In reference to the Czechs he stated:

To Bohemia Germanic civilization is profoundly distasteful. The Czechs have been waging war against it for some generations, and waging it under grave difficulties with much success. Whether an independent Bohemia would be strong enough to hold her own, from a military as well as from a commercial point of view, against Teutonic domination ... I do not know; but I am sure the question deserves very careful consideration. If the change is possible it should be made.

Although Balfour did not elaborate, presumably if independence was not possible, Bohemia would remain a part of the Dual monarchy. While he could offer them little, Balfour singled out the Czechs for special consideration without apparent reason. By its context, the statement indicates that he had been influenced by Czech propaganda. It may be that he was influenced by knowledge of Czech assistance to the government; for he was first lord of the admiralty while Voska was working for naval

¹⁰⁵ Balfour, 'The Peace Settlement in Europe', 4 Oct. 1916, Cab. 37-157-7.

intelligence. Balfour did not refer to the Yugoslav programme but appeared to support the idea of a Greater Serbia by recommending that it should receive the South Slav areas.

The Balfour memorandum was, perhaps unconsciously, a compromise between the previous memoranda. His recommendations were based on a synthesis of the balance of power and the nationality principle which avoided the impracticability of Paget and Tyrrell and the lack of relevance to European problems of Robertson. While Robertson's proposals most accurately reflected the stated official policy of the British government in 1916, Balfour's proposals probably reflected the dominant preference of the cabinet, if such existed, on the subject of war aims in eastern Europe. In that the émigrés could find little comfort.

The submission of these memoranda to the cabinet was not followed by any discussion of war aims. The optimism of the summer had not survived the military reverses on the Somme, in Galicia and Rumania, and there was no longer any need for haste in the discussion of war aims. The policy of the government remained, therefore, as it had been since 1914, one of flexibility through the avoidance of unnecessary commitments in areas of secondary importance. On specific issues such as the future of Austria-Hungary or the application of national self-determination, it cannot be said that the government had a policy.

Since national self-determination was not important enough to be discussed by the cabinet, there is little evidence of the personal views of its members. Asquith and Runciman probably shared the limited sympathy for the nationalities shown by Grey and Balfour but would not have gone further.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, there is no reason to assume that Lansdowne,

¹⁰⁶ See above, pp.21, 49, 98. Delmé-Radcliffe to Bonham Carter, 27 April 1916, F.O. 371-2602-86039.

Curzon, Bonar Law or Chamberlain had any sympathy whatever for the subject nationalities. Lloyd George at least appeared to be a supporter of national self-determination; for on August 27, 1916, in a conversation on war aims, he said to H.A.L. Fisher:

It is clear to me that Germany must be strong. We have to consider Russia.... What would be the objection to joining German Austria to Germany? I would cut off Hungary from Austria. Hungary should be an independent Kingdom. It is very unwholesome for Hungary to rule the Slavs. They should be separated. I admit that Bohemia is a difficulty.

Lloyd George was not particularly well informed about the distribution of nationalities in eastern Europe. When Fisher suggested that the Slovaks might also be a difficulty, he replied:

Who are the Slovaks? [Fisher] Well they are Slavs, peasants, and about 2 million strong. [Lloyd George] Where are they? I don't seem to place them. [Fisher] On the west of Hungary. [Lloyd George] And where are the Ruthenians? [Fisher] On the North.

Lloyd George also stated that 'The Austrian Empire must be broken up' and expressed his support for a Yugoslav state, characteristically adding: 'I am attracted by the Serbs. They are like the Welsh.' These comments show where Lloyd George's sympathy lay, but they should not be taken too seriously because he ended the discussion by saying: 'I am against discussing the settlement of Europe in public. The war spirit is a madness. While it is on you cannot pledge yourself to anything profitably. You must keep everything indefinite.'¹⁰⁷

The foreign office, but not the cabinet, was subject to influence from the émigrés because it conducted relations with them. Except for Grey and perhaps Balfour, members of the cabinet were probably not aware of the co-operation that existed between the émigrés and the various branches of the government. Between 1914 and 1916, these relations were

¹⁰⁷ Fisher, 'Notes on conversation with Lloyd George', 27 Aug. 1916, Fisher MSS. 24.

conducted entirely by officials without reference to the cabinet. The war aims memoranda were the first occasion upon which the idea of national self-determination officially reached the cabinet level. Cabinet members were subjected to memoranda from various émigrés which they undoubtedly left unread because their relations with the émigrés lacked the ingredient of co-operation which existed in those between the foreign office and the émigrés. A cabinet member had no reason to read such memoranda, but an official who wanted assistance from the émigrés had to take their political programmes seriously. It was therefore inevitable that the foreign office would be subject to far greater influence from the émigrés. This situation created the possibility that in the future a definite split might develop between the cabinet and the foreign office on the subject of war aims. Since the sympathy for the nationalities in the cabinet seemed, with the exception of Balfour, to exist among the Liberals but not the Conservatives, the possibility of a split would increase with the weakening of the Liberal element in the government.

In November 1916, Maurice Hankey, the secretary of the war committee, listed those war aims upon which there seemed to be general agreement. On eastern Europe the list included the following: ' (iii) That some arrangement should be made in regard to Poland which is acceptable to Russia.... (vi) That Serbia should be re-established.'¹⁰⁸ Hankey's memorandum cannot be considered a definitive statement of war aims but, because of his undoubted knowledge of the views of the cabinet, it is an indication of both the lack of support for national self-determination and the general desire in the government to avoid the subject of non-

¹⁰⁸ Hankey, 'The General Review of the War', 31 Oct. 1916, Cab. 24-2-92.

essential war aims. The government was only prepared to accept commitments under the greatest pressure. Hankey also wrote:

it is impossible to contemplate with equanimity the prospect of a discussion of peace terms at any date, however remote, until the balance of advantage has inclined far more decisively than at present to the side of the Allies, ...

Although some members of the cabinet were extremely pessimistic about the military and naval situation in the autumn of 1916, the majority of the cabinet, backed by the military authorities, agreed with Hankey that the unfavourable strategic situation made the prospect of peace negotiations highly undesirable.¹⁰⁹ It must be added that whenever peace was discussed, national self-determination was never considered a reason for rejecting negotiations. The war would not be continued for non-essential aims in areas of secondary importance. Despite the reluctance to negotiate, it was obvious that in the near future President Wilson would attempt some form of mediation. During the last six months of 1916, rumours to this effect were numerous although no one was certain when he would act.¹¹⁰ In an attempt to forestall mediation, Lloyd George gave an interview in September 1916 to an American reporter in which he absolutely rejected the idea of outside interference in the conflict.¹¹¹ Nevertheless the Entente was still heavily dependent upon the United States for the

¹⁰⁹ Robertson memo., 14 Dec. 1916, Cab. 29-1-11. War committee, 21 Mar. 1916, Cab. 42-11-6. War committee, 10 Aug. 1916, Cab. 42-17-5. Hardinge to Bertie, 4 Oct. 1916, F.O.800-172. Scott diary, 20-22 Nov. 1916, Scott Mss. 50903.

¹¹⁰ Spring Rice to Grey, 17 July 1916, F.O.115-2090-20. Bertie diary, 15 Aug. 1916, F.O.800-175. Crowe to Paget, 14 Oct. 1916, Paget Mss. 51256. Spring Rice to Grey, 28 Nov. 1916, F.O.115-2090-43.

¹¹¹ Grey to Lloyd George, 29 Sept. 1916, Lloyd George Ms.E2-13-5. Grey feared that the interview would offend Wilson and destroy the possibility of future mediation. Scott diary, 2-3 Oct. 1916, Scott Mss. 50903. Northcliffe to Lloyd George, 27 Sept. 1916, Lloyd George Ms.E2-21-3. Hardinge to Spring Rice, 5 Oct. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 26. Hardinge to Bertie, 10 Oct. 1916, F.O.800-172.

maintenance of the war effort so that any attempted mediation would be most embarrassing because the negotiations would have to be avoided without giving offence to Wilson and the American public.¹¹²

On December 5, 1916, Asquith resigned and Lloyd George formed a new government dedicated to the more vigorous prosecution of the war. Runciman and Grey followed Asquith while Balfour became the secretary of state for foreign affairs. The change meant the decline of those who seemed most sympathetic to the nationalities, although this trend was offset by Balfour's appointment. But that sympathy had been of little value to the *émigrés*. The ultimate success of national self-determination depended not on the sympathy of British statesmen but on the course of the war. The destruction of the Central powers brought about by a more vigorous conduct of the war would contribute more to the cause, regardless of the intentions of the victors, than all the sympathy of all the Liberals.

On December 20, 1916, President Wilson addressed a note to the belligerents asking for an authoritative statement of war aims.¹¹³ The request could be answered by a simple rejection of outside interference, but if Lloyd George now acted on the views he expressed in September, he would seriously risk alienating the United States. On December 22, 1916, Cecil proposed that the reply should be a positive statement outlining Allied objectives and designed to appeal to Wilson and the American public. He warned that rejection of the note might alienate Wilson and lead to

¹¹² Grey to Runciman, 30 Sept. 1916, Runciman Mss. Bertie diary, 11 Aug. 1916, F.O.800-171.

¹¹³ Cecil to Spring Rice, 20 Dec. 1916, Cab.37-161-44.

retaliation.¹¹⁴ Cecil was acting on advice received by the foreign office from numerous sources, particularly Spring Rice, who was adamant that the reply had to be positive and designed to appeal to Wilson.¹¹⁵ Even after that advice had been accepted he could not stop stressing the point.¹¹⁶ On December 23, 1916, the cabinet approved the proposal without opposition and asked Cecil and Balfour to submit drafts of a reply.¹¹⁷

To ensure that the reply would appeal to Wilson, Cecil, in writing his own draft, consulted the American ambassador in London and referred to the views expressed earlier in the year on the future of Europe by E.M. House, Wilson's unofficial adviser on foreign policy.¹¹⁸ On December 21, 1916, Drummond suggested that Cecil should consult House's memorandum on peace terms and even suggested consulting House through secret service channels on the text of the reply. On the same day Cecil circulated the House memorandum to the cabinet with an accompanying minute stating that it represented Wilson's own views. If necessary this could be verified: 'Secret means exist to communicate direct with Colonel House,

¹¹⁴ Cecil, 'Proposed Action in Regard to American Note', 22 Dec. 1916, Cab.37-162-12.

¹¹⁵ The Entente was preparing a reply to the German peace note and much of the advice given in the first seems to have been used for the second. Buchanan to Grey, 13 Dec.1916, F.O.371-2805-25212. Spring Rice to F.O., 14 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2090-54. Cecil minute, 15 Dec.1916, F.O.800-197. Spring Rice to F.O., 17 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2090-60. Spring Rice to F.O., 20 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2090-65. Spring Rice to F.O., 21 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2090-68. Spring Rice to F.O., 21 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2090-69.

¹¹⁶ Spring Rice to F.O., 26 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2091-96. Spring Rice to Balfour, 26 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2091-99.

¹¹⁷ War cabinet 16, 23 Dec.1916, Cab.37-162-12. Balfour to Spring Rice, 26 Dec.1916, F.O.371-2806-260988. Balfour minute, 29 Dec.1916, F.O.371-2806-264041.

¹¹⁸ War cabinet 18, 26 Dec.1916, Cab.37-162-17. Cecil minute, Scott to Balfour, 24 Dec.1916, Balfour Mss. 49865.

and it would be possible, if thought desirable, to inquire of him whether the Memorandum of February 22nd still holds good in its entirety, and whether the President still concurs in its terms.'¹¹⁹ The issue was again considered by the cabinet on December 26, 1916, but the actual drafting of the reply was referred to the Anglo-French conference meeting in London later that day.¹²⁰ At the conference: 'M. Ribot [French Minister of Finance] said it came to this: Was our reply to be a diplomatic Note or an answer to the American People? The Conference agreed that the essence of it was an appeal to democracy.'¹²¹

At a second session, on December 28, 1916, a preliminary draft was approved. Balfour later claimed that the reply was primarily a combination of his and Cecil's drafts.¹²² A comparison of these drafts with the final text bears out Balfour's claim, with some exceptions, on those parts of the reply related to eastern Europe.¹²³ The reply, delivered to the American government on January 10, 1917, stated that Europe had to be reorganized on the basis of, among other things, 'the respect for nationalities'. In elaborating on this point the following terms were

¹¹⁹ Drummond to Cecil, 21 Dec.1916, F.O.800-197. Cecil, cabinet minute, 21 Dec.1916, Lloyd George Ms.F160-1-4. Guinn, British Strategy, pp.124-25. L. Woodward, Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918, London 1967, pp.217-223. The government had contact with House through Gaunt. W.B. Fowler, British-American Relations, 1917-1918, Princeton 1969, pp.14-15.

¹²⁰ War cabinet 18, 26 Dec.1916, Cab.37-162-17.

¹²¹ Anglo-French conference, 26 Dec.1916, Anglo-French conference, 28 Dec. 1916, Cab. 28-2.

¹²² Balfour to Sanderson, 4 Jan.1917, Balfour Mss.49739.

¹²³ Cecil, 'Proposed Action in Regard to American Note', 22 Dec. 1916, Cab.37-162-12. Cecil draft, 24 Dec.1916, F.O.371-2805-260746. Balfour draft, 30 Dec. 1916, Cab.37-162-31. Draft reply, 29 Dec. 1916, F.O.371-2806-264233.

stipulated:

the liberation of the Italians, as also of the Slavs, Rumanes, and Czecho-Slovaks from foreign domination; ... The intentions of his Majesty the Emperor of Russia in regard to Poland have been clearly indicated by the manifesto he has just addressed to his armies. ¹²⁴

These statements, while very carefully phrased, sounded like an endorsement of national self-determination. Had there been a change in official war aims policy? Cecil, who disliked nationalism yet supported the inclusion of these statements in the note, stated on December 26, 1916: 'The probable result of the Allied discussions will be a formless note of no significance whatever'.¹²⁵ In referring to the note much later in the house of commons, Cecil stated that the government was not pledged to any particular form of liberation.¹²⁶ In the process of drafting the note, the sole consideration had been its potential appeal to American democracy. No one ever suggested that it was to be an accurate reflection of war aims policy, and no consideration was given to the real significance or possible interpretations of the terms. Although Balfour probably took the contents of the note seriously, as they reflected his own personal views, there is no evidence that anyone else agreed with him. The note cannot be considered an accurate reflection of British war aims policy which was designed to avoid such commitments. The aims stated in the

¹²⁴ G.L. Dickinson (ed.) Documents and Statements Relating to Peace Proposals and War Aims, London 1919, 'The Allies' Reply to President Wilson's Note of December 18th. January 10, 1917', pp.10-13. The Russian proclamation referred to in the note was the tsar's Order of the Day for December 25, 1916. It stated that one of the tasks of the war was to create a free Poland consisting of all of its three parts. In this context 'free' undoubtedly meant autonomous. Komarnicki, Rebirth, pp.46-47.

¹²⁵ Cecil minute, Crowe to Cecil, 26 Dec. 1916, F.O.371-2806-262697.

¹²⁶ Parliamentary Debates, Commons, vol.96, col.1202, 24 July 1917.

note would never have been publicly endorsed by the government without external pressure of the type that Wilson could exert upon the Entente. The note must be considered not as part of a war aims policy but as part of a strategic policy which allowed for the acceptance of commitments whenever necessary for the maintenance of the war effort.

The terms of the note, by their vagueness, did not commit the Entente to any specific solution to eastern European problems. Since liberation could mean autonomy as well as independence, the Entente's freedom of action to meet further contingencies was not unduly restricted.¹²⁷ But the note was important regardless of official intentions. As the first occasion upon which the government publicly referred to the Czechoslovaks, it was for them a form of recognition which drew public attention to their cause. The note also supplied ammunition to those, like Seton-Watson, who had always argued, regardless of the facts, that the government had been committed to national self-determination since 1914. Regardless of official intention, the note gave the impression and was widely interpreted as a commitment to national self-determination. If in the future the government failed to meet the expectations created by the note, it would inevitably be subject to recriminations that it had broken its word.¹²⁸ The note also had an immediate effect on official British propaganda which now openly advocated national self-determination thus supplying even more

¹²⁷ A. Ribot, Letters to a Friend, Recollections of My Political Life, London 1926, pp.224-8.

¹²⁸ Both the émigrés and the Habsburg authorities interpreted the reply as meaning that the Entente intended to destroy the Empire. Z.A.B. Zeman, The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918, London 1961, pp.113-118. A.J. May, The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918, Philadelphia 1966, pp.471-474.

evidence upon which to base future recriminations against the government.¹²⁹ Since such recriminations are always better avoided, the government had, by stating these aims, to some extent limited its future alternatives.

The reference in the note to Poland, insisted upon by Balfour and Cecil, was undoubtedly motivated by the desire to satisfy the American government as well as the Polish émigrés.¹³⁰ The idea might have originated with House whose views Cecil used in writing his draft.¹³¹ The well-known interest of the American government in this problem was confirmed on December 28, 1916 when Spring Rice telegraphed that a statement on Poland would have a good effect on Wilson.¹³² The inevitable Russian objections to the reference were only overcome through the application of great pressure by the Allied ambassadors in Petrograd acting on Balfour's statement that 'the omission would probably produce a bad effect in the United States'.¹³³

Since the Czechoslovaks and Poles were mentioned elsewhere in the note, it might be assumed that the reference to 'Slavs' meant Yugoslavs. Some have even assumed that 'Yugo' was deleted because of Italian

¹²⁹ The following pamphlets (T102-20) reflect the greater emphasis on national self-determination in Wellington House propaganda during 1917: J.W. Headlam, The Peace Terms of the Allies, London 1917; L.B. Namier, The Case of Bohemia, London 1917; L.B. Namier, The Czecho-Slovaks, London 1917. These are just a sample which indicate a definite shift in the emphasis in British propaganda following the reply to President Wilson.

¹³⁰ Balfour draft, 30 Dec. 1916, Cab.37-162-31. Cecil draft, 24 Dec. 1916, F.O.371-2805-260746.

¹³¹ See above, p.156.

¹³² Spring Rice to Hardinge, 28 Dec.1916, F.O.115-2091-109. Spring Rice to Balfour, 29 Dec.1916, Balfour Mss.49740. See above, Ch. III.

¹³³ Balfour to Buchanan, 3 Jan.1917, F.O.371-3075-2031. Buchanan to F.O., 1 Jan.1917, F.O.371-3075-1290. Buchanan to Hardinge, 2 Jan.1917, Hardinge Mss.29. F.O. to Buchanan, 6 Jan.1917, F.O.371-3075-4588. Buchanan to F.O., 5 Jan.1917, F.O.371-3075-5269. Buchanan to F.O., 8 Jan.1917, F.O.371-3075-6675.

objections.¹³⁴ The phrase originated in Cecil's draft as 'the liberation of the Slav peoples from German domination.'¹³⁵ There is no evidence of Italian objections although Cecil might have used this wording in anticipation of such opposition. Since Cecil had no sympathy for the subject nationalities, this phrase was undoubtedly motivated by his general aim of satisfying the United States.

Since it did not occur in either the Balfour or Cecil drafts, the reference to the Czechoslovaks is more mysterious. It does not appear to have been discussed at the sessions of the Anglo-French conference and it cannot be found in any of the English texts of the note. According to Eduard Beneš, Masaryk's lieutenant in Paris, Briand inserted it at the last moment.¹³⁶ The total lack of comment by the British on its insertion leads to the conclusion that they were consulted, for unilateral French action would have undoubtedly elicited some reaction. Almost twenty years later Cecil wrote: 'If I am right in my recollection, it was the first time that Czechoslovakia appeared in a diplomatic document and I am ashamed to say I had some doubts as to what it was'.¹³⁷ This statement suggests that Cecil was consulted on the insertion. On December 13, 1916, Wiseman, in reference to the reply to the German peace note, cabled to London:

¹³⁴ Macartney, Eastern Europe, p.67. Hanak, Great Britain, p.216. The theory seems to have originated with Seton-Watson. Cecil's original wording probably referred to Slavs in general. The reference to Czechoslovaks was added later and the Italians may have prevented the addition of a more specific reference to the Yugoslavs.

¹³⁵ Cecil, 'Proposed Action in Regard to American Note', 22 Dec. 1916, Cab.37-162-12.

¹³⁶ Beneš, Memoirs, pp.153-157.

¹³⁷ Cecil to Dugdale, 14 May 1934, Cecil Mss. 51157.

If British reply to German peace proposals contains no mention of Bohemian aspirations, it is probable that the work done for us here by Czechs will suffer, and possible that if too much discourages they might listen to bids from Central Empires. This might cause us considerable harm. 138

Although it was an official cable, there is no indication to whom it was addressed - the secret service or the foreign office. A copy exists in the Wiseman papers but, not unexpectedly, cannot be found in the government records. If the secret service had some influence on the reference to the Czechoslovaks, it is unlikely that a record of that influence would survive, but it is as plausible an explanation of the reference as any other that has been offered. It could have been Voska's reward.

The reply included references to national self-determination in order to appeal to President Wilson and American democracy. The Allies, with justification, believed that Wilson was becoming interested in the nationalities, particularly the Poles. That interest was based largely on the political influence of the nationalities as well as the general public interest in national self-determination. These conditions in the United States to which the Entente responded were obviously related to previous British action. For almost two years British propaganda had promoted the idea of national self-determination in the United States. At the same time, British officials had encouraged and supported the efforts of the various nationalities to acquire political influence through organization. In replying to President Wilson and in making references to national self-determination, the government was responding to a necessity which its agents had helped to create. The methods adopted by various

138 Wiseman cable, 13 Dec. 1916, Wiseman Mss. 90-38.

branches of the government for the conduct of the war were beginning to influence the reasons for which it was being fought and, indirectly, its results.

Chapter V

Britain and Austria-Hungary, 1917-1918

In January 1917 the British government was committed neither to the preservation nor to the destruction of the Habsburg monarchy. To a government involved in a war for survival, and concerned with the immediate problems of its own preservation, the future of Austria-Hungary was an issue of at most secondary importance. The government was not totally indifferent to the future of eastern Europe but its aims in that area were of a general nature, and might be achieved by any one of a number of solutions proposed for the final settlement. Any solution which did not increase the military potential of the Central powers and which was conducive to peace and stability was acceptable. It could be argued that these aims would be satisfied by the preservation of the Habsburg monarchy, by the absolute application of national self-determination or by any one of a number of compromises between these two which in practice would mean self-determination for some nationalities but not others. While the relative merits of each solution were debatable, conclusive evidence did not and could not exist by which the policy-makers could predict which solution would best satisfy their general aims in eastern Europe. The solutions could be tested only by application. While the war was in progress and the future of Europe uncertain, there was no overwhelming need for the government to choose the programme for eastern Europe that it would favour during peace negotiations. Many officials, particularly in the foreign office, had their own preference, usually for national

self-determination, but the government remained uncommitted and unconvinced. The government was prepared to accept binding commitments based on strategic calculations designed to promote the conduct of the war, but not prepared to accept commitments based on its own calculation of its long-term political interest in the future structure of eastern Europe. By avoiding commitments which were not immediately necessary the government was able to maximize its alternatives and use the resulting flexibility to increase its military potential. National self-determination, as an alternative to the status quo, had been considered by the foreign office during the first years of the war, but had never been discussed by the cabinet. The preservation of Austria-Hungary, in contrast, was not seriously considered by anyone in the government. Excluding the attacks by the exponents of national self-determination few references to the question of the future of the Habsburg monarchy appear in the existing records. In this case the lack of evidence of interest within the government, and particularly within the cabinet, cannot be attributed either to a conspiracy of silence or to the destruction of documents; it must be considered as evidence of indifference. Before 1917 no one in the government argued that Austria-Hungary ought to be preserved. No one argued that its existence would be the best solution to the problems of eastern Europe, that it was necessary for the balance of power or in the interest of Britain. No one suggested that any sacrifice however small should be made for the preservation of Austria-Hungary. Despite overwhelming provocation from the exponents of national self-determination, no one rose to the defence of Austria-Hungary. Despite the preferences within the foreign office, the government was indifferent to the future of the Habsburg monarchy. Its survival or destruction would be equally acceptable to the government as long as the

settlement in eastern Europe tended to promote peace and stability while not increasing German power.

Although uncommitted on the future of Austria-Hungary, the government, acting on considerations of strategic necessity, had accepted binding and far-reaching commitments to Italy and Rumania which, if fulfilled, might well destroy the Habsburg monarchy. By the treaty of London Italy had been promised the Trentino, Cisalpine Tyrol, Trieste, Gorizia, Gradisca, Istria and northern Dalmatia.¹ Rumania had been promised Transylvania, the Banat and the Bukovina.² There was good reason to assume that the monarchy could never survive such amputations. Any government which accepted such terms would risk extinction because of the internal reaction, particularly from the Magyars. The effect of such losses on the prestige of the monarchy might be more than it could stand. But as no Habsburg government could accept such terms, the Allies were committed, as long as Italy and Rumania continued to fight, to continue the war until the Habsburg army was destroyed. From that, Austria-Hungary could hardly survive. Remarkable as it may seem, in the negotiations with Italy and Rumania, the government had failed to consider the effect of these terms on the future of the monarchy. Since enemy territory was considered forfeit, the negotiations were conducted without reference to Austria-Hungary. Robertson, who assumed that it might survive, incorrectly concluded from the negotiations that the government intended to destroy Austria-Hungary.³ Several comments, during the negotiations, show some awareness that these terms would necessitate the military defeat of the Habsburg army, but it seems to have been

¹ See above, pp. 43-49.

² See above, pp. 53-54.

³ See above, p. 148.

assumed that despite defeat and the anticipated amputations the monarchy could survive.⁴ Paget and Tyrrell would not have argued for its destruction had they believed that its fate had already been decided. Balfour assumed that a Habsburg monarchy comprising only those areas which were ethnographically German-Austrian and Hungarian was a practical possibility, despite losses of territory so enormous as to change it beyond recognition. The significance of the agreements with Italy and Rumania was clearly misunderstood, and thought devoted to the future of the monarchy extremely confused, not because the situation was so complex as to be incomprehensible, for Robertson had recognized the significance, but because few addressed themselves to the problem. Those not interested in the survival of the monarchy had no reason to ponder its future. The government had always been extremely careful in its relations with the nationalities in order to maintain various alternative courses of action. But what it had guarded with its right hand it had, as subsequent events were to show, unwittingly given away with its left.

A separate peace with Austria-Hungary had always been a possibility and had been, on occasion, considered by the foreign office. Once, during the Balkan negotiations, the foreign office had rejected the idea of a separate peace, but there was no indication, after those negotiations had finished, that further Austrian approaches would be rejected. But in the absence of such approaches the possibility was not seriously considered. A separate peace which would enable Austria-Hungary to survive would not signify or necessitate any alteration in the war aims policy of the British government for, as has been explained, the government had no particular

⁴ See above, pp. 62-63.

objection to its survival or desire for its destruction. A separate peace would, however, necessitate a fundamental alteration in British strategic policy because those anti-Habsburg elements which the government had always encouraged would have to be abandoned.

During 1917 government thought on the future of eastern Europe was dominated, almost to the exclusion of all else, by the possibility of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. In this situation the policy-makers had to contemplate, for the first time, the problems of eastern Europe in an immediate and practical sense. As a result, the preferences for national self-determination which had emerged in previous hypothetical discussions receded into the background and little consideration was given to the cause of the nationalities. For the émigrés the year had begun with the reply to President Wilson. It had been the most significant statement by the Allied governments on the cause of the nationalities, and had justifiably created great expectations. But it was a false start, for nothing that followed during 1917 satisfied these expectations. No sooner had the reply been given than it was forgotten.

On January 10, 1917, the British minister in Christiania informed the foreign office that he had received approaches, apparently official, from Austrian agents on the subject of a separate peace.⁵ Despite ample evidence that Austria-Hungary was labouring under such severe economic conditions as a result of the war and the blockade that it might desire a negotiated peace, the foreign office was quite sceptical about the

⁵ Findlay to F.O., 10 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3079-7661. The best and most thorough study of negotiations for a separate peace is W.B. Fest, 'The Habsburg Monarchy in British Policy, 1914-1918', Oxford D.Phil., 1970. Fest has outlined the negotiations in exhaustive detail but exaggerates the British desire to maintain the Habsburg monarchy.

feasibility of a separate peace because the agreements with Italy and Rumania seemed to be insurmountable obstacles to any negotiations.⁶

Although, on January 18, 1917, the war cabinet instructed Balfour to follow up these approaches, and although a special emissary was sent to Christiania, nothing came of this incident.⁷ The cabinet's decision to respond to these approaches marked the beginning of a long and fruitless exploration by the British government, lasting well into 1918, for the illusory separate peace.

The immediately favourable reaction of the cabinet to the idea of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary must be seen within the context of the strategic position in 1917. The campaigns in the summer of 1916 in Galicia, in Rumania and on the Somme had been fought at great cost and with little success. The deterioration in Russian military strength, already apparent to the Allies, made optimism about the future course of the war difficult. In 1915 the Allies had sought a quick solution to the war in a Balkan league, in 1916 they placed their hopes on Rumania, and in 1917, with equal self-deception, they sought the solution of their military problems in detaching Austria-Hungary from Germany. On January 18, 1917, when the cabinet discussed the issue, the military advantages led Robertson to support the pursuit of a separate peace.⁸ Throughout 1917 the war office never wavered in this support, which even increased

⁶ Graham and Balfour minutes, 11 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3079-7661.

⁷ Hankey, 'Proceedings in Regard to a Separate Peace with Austria', Cab.1-27. War cabinet 37a, 18 Jan. 1917, Cab. 23-13. Paget to Hardinge, 17 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3079-13580. Hardinge to Findlay, 19 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3079-7661. Hardinge to Paget, 2 Feb. 1917, Paget to Hardinge, 9 Feb. 1917, Paget Mes. 51253. Balfour to Paget, 17 Feb. 1917, Paget Mes.51252. Lloyd George to Balfour, 17 Feb. 1917, Lloyd George Ms.F3-3-13. Hopwood memorandum, 17 Mar. 1917, Cab. 1-24-9.

⁸ War cabinet 37a, 18 Jan. 1917, Cab. 23-13.

as the strategic situation deteriorated with the collapse of Russia.⁹ The military failures of 1917 so severely shook the confidence of the war office that by the end of the year it was ready to admit that total victory was unattainable. On December 29, 1917, Robertson wrote in a memorandum for the war cabinet:

there is no prospect of ever acquiring all those vast enemy territories which the different members of the Entente have been promised or wish to acquire; and, therefore, leaving aside these ambitious territorial gains, the question is can we get what we must get if we are to secure the future peace of the world.¹⁰

On January 21, 1918, the commander-in-chief of the British Expeditionary Force, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, who was usually extremely confident, told General Jan C. Smuts, the South African representative on the imperial war cabinet, that there was little value in continuing the war as both the French and the Italians might soon collapse.¹¹ The war office was concerned solely with the military aspects of a separate peace, and showed no interest whatever in the terms upon which it might be negotiated. On a number of occasions Robertson argued that Allied aims should be moderated and that the agreements with the lesser Allies, Italy and Rumania, should be reconsidered. He believed that they had failed to contribute to the defeat of the Central powers, but was never able to suggest how the engagements could be renegotiated without fragmenting the Entente.¹² In essence,

⁹ War cabinet 121, 17 April 1917, Cab.23-2. Robertson, 9 May 1917, Cecil Mss.51093. War cabinet 200, 13 July 1917, Cab.23-13. Robertson to Lloyd George, 29 Sept. 1917, W.O. 106-1515.

¹⁰ Robertson memorandum, 29 Dec. 1917, W.O. 106-1517.

¹¹ Smuts to Lloyd George, 21 Jan. 1918, Lloyd George Ms. F45-9-9.

¹² Robertson memorandum, 29 Mar. 1917, W.O. 106-1512-13. Robertson, 9 May 1917, Cecil Mss. 51093. General staff memorandum, 7 July 1917, W.O. 106-1516. War cabinet 200, 13 July 1917, Cab. 23-13. Robertson, 29 July 1917, Cecil Mss. 51093.

Robertson wanted the lesser Allies to abandon their aims without abandoning the war.

The only branch of the government which was unalterably opposed to a separate peace with Austria-Hungary was the intelligence bureau of the department of information. It was staffed by exponents of national self-determination like Namier and Seton-Watson. The head of the bureau, Major General Count Gleichen, and its other members, J.W. Headlam, R. Leeper and A.W.A. Leeper, were also supporters of the nationalities.¹³ The bureau disagreed with government policy because it approached the problems of diplomacy in war from an entirely different basis. Its officials, like Namier and Seton-Watson, based their advice on the assumption that the war aims of the government should be founded on calculations of the long-term political interests of the British government in eastern Europe. Overestimating the power of the government, they thought that it should set out its ideal aims and then fight until they were achieved. In contrast, the other branches of the government felt compelled to adjust war aims to a realistic analysis of the power of the British government. The war office overlooked political considerations; the intelligence bureau disregarded the dictates of military necessity. Since the intelligence bureau did not have to solve immediate strategic problems, military expediency did not play a significant role in its calculations. But since strategic necessity played a primary role in the formation of government policy, it was almost inevitable that the intelligence bureau would be in opposition now just as its members had opposed previous actions of the government based on similar

¹³ Intelligence bureau, 'Office Orders', 1 June 1917, F.O.395-148-117714. Namier memorandum, 11 May 1917, F.O. 371-2862-97435. Gleichen memorandum, 15 May 1917, Cab.24-14. Headlam to Drummond, 29 July 1917, F.O.800-197. Hanak, Great Britain, p.176.

considerations as in the case of the negotiations for the treaty of London.¹⁴ Such disagreement had existed since the beginning of the war, but had had little or no effect on official policy. During 1917, while the government sought a separate peace with Austria-Hungary, the intelligence bureau campaigned against this policy with the only weapon at its disposal, the weekly reports it circulated to various branches of the government.¹⁵ Namier well represented the views of the intelligence bureau when he wrote in one of these reports:

Austria-Hungary is bound to remain in international politics dependent on Germany because Germany is the only Power which defends the basis on which the Habsburg Monarchy rests - German preponderance in Austria and Magyar dominion in Hungary; and this is the only basis on which the Habsburg Monarchy can exist.¹⁶

But these reports had no discernible effect on British policy; they may not even have been read. The bureau certainly failed to divert the government from its chosen course of a separate peace.

The abortive attempt to initiate negotiations with Austrian agents in January 1917 inspired the members of the foreign office to consider, for the first time, the possibility and the repercussions of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. Hardinge thought that the Allied agreements with Italy, Serbia and particularly Rumania might be insurmountable barriers to negotiations, an opinion almost universal in the foreign office. Nevertheless, he still favoured further investigation of the possibility of a

¹⁴ See above, pp. 47-49.

¹⁵ Seton-Watson memorandum, 15 May 1917, F.O. 371-2862-94508. Intelligence bureau memorandum, 24 May 1917, F.O. 371-2862-103995. Weekly report, 18 June 1917, F.O. 371-2862-129141. Weekly report, 9 July 1917, Milner Mss. 108-1.

¹⁶ Namier memorandum, 11 May 1917, F.O. 371-2862-97435.

separate peace because it would make the defeat of Germany 'comparatively easy'. He did not contemplate abandoning the solemn pledges the government had made to its lesser allies, but he believed that there was a slight possibility that they might reduce their war aims. Although he forgot the Czechoslovaks, he suggested that the other nationalities could be satisfied by giving Bosnia, Herzegovina and access to the Adriatic to Serbia, by ceding Galicia to the autonomous Russian Poland, and by establishing within the Habsburg monarchy an autonomous Yugoslav state made up of those South Slav areas not ceded to Serbia. The primary British objective in eastern Europe, the formation of a barrier to the German Drang nach Osten, would be achieved by a reconstituted Habsburg monarchy, which having deserted its allies and having made a separate peace, would be alienated from Germany.¹⁷

On February 12, 1917, Drummond expanded the ideas already suggested by Hardinge. He accepted the need for a barrier to the German drive to the East but believed that the Habsburg monarchy could be such a barrier if, by making a separate peace, it was alienated from Germany. It would be an even more effective barrier if it was reconstituted into four autonomous states of Austria, Hungary, Bohemia and Yugoslavia. Serbia would be given Bosnia, Herzegovina and part of Dalmatia, while Galicia would be ceded to Poland. Drummond admitted that Serbia, Italy and Rumania might block negotiations, but he was more optimistic than Hardinge that such obstacles could be overcome. He also believed that peace with Austria-Hungary would not affect Italy's belligerent status because of

¹⁷ Hardinge minute, 18 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3079-13580. Hardinge to Beaumont, 1 Feb. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 29. Hardinge to Paget, 7 Feb. 1917, F.O. 371-3079-25651.

Italy's desire for territory in Asia Minor. The remarks with which he prefaced his memorandum clearly show his own preference for the future of eastern Europe and his reasons for supporting a separate peace:

If the Allies were certain that the result of the war would be so decisive that they would be able to impose their own terms on the Central Powers, I still believe that the solution outlined in the Paget-Tyrrell memorandum is the best for the future of Europe. But if such terms are unlikely to be secured in their entirety, or if a different solution would materially shorten the war, the possible advantages of a separate peace with Austria by some such scheme as I have ventured to outline somewhat roughly are, I think, worth careful consideration.¹⁸

Throughout 1917 Drummond consistently supported efforts to initiate negotiations for a separate peace, and within the foreign office remained one of its major advocates.¹⁹ Although the others did not express their views in as much detail, it is apparent that Clerk, Gregory, Paget, Tyrrell, Sir Ronald Graham, an assistant under-secretary of state, and Lancelot Oliphant, an assistant clerk, all supported the general argument put forward by Hardinge and Drummond: not that a separate peace should be made to preserve Austria-Hungary but that, if a separate peace were a military necessity, as they all believed it to be, the continued existence of a Habsburg monarchy irreparably alienated from Germany would be consistent with British interests.²⁰ Graham, Clerk and Oliphant, however, doubted whether such a peace was possible.²¹ Cecil was the exception in the

¹⁸ Drummond memorandum GT43, 12 Feb. 1917, Cab. 24-6.

¹⁹ S. Roskill, Hankey: Man of Secrets, vol. I, 1877-1918, London 1970, pp.401, 507.

²⁰ Tyrrell to Drummond, 26 Feb. 1917, F.O.800-384. Paget to Hardinge, 1 Feb. 1917, F.O.371-3079-25651. Oliphant minute, Graham minute, 15 Jan. 1917, F.O.371-3079-11312. Gregory memorandum, 18 Nov. 1917, F.O.371-3002-218943. Clerk minute, 31 Mar. 1917, F.O.371-2863-68110. Clerk minute, 13 April 1917, F.O.371-2864-157767.

²¹ Oliphant minute, 2 Feb. 1917, F.O.371-3079-25651. Oliphant minute, Graham minute, 12 Mar. 1917, F.O.371-3133-45538.

foreign office. In his reply to Drummond's memorandum he stated that the preservation of a reconstituted Habsburg monarchy would be the best solution for the future of eastern Europe because it would prevent balkanization.²² He added that a separate peace would almost certainly break the blockade of Germany, but in future deliberations within the government on the question of a separate peace this detail, along with so many others, was neglected when the military advantages of a separate peace were calculated. His general attitude towards the nationalities was best expressed in a letter he wrote in November 1917 to J. St. Loe Strachey, the editor of the Spectator:

I must honestly admit to you that I am to some extent a heretic. I recognize, of course, that we must do all we can for the Poles and the Yugo-Slavs and the Czechs, but I must add that I cannot look forward with much enthusiasm to the success of our efforts. As far as I can see the Slavs have never shewn the slightest capacity for self-government. Steed and his friends would no doubt regard this as ignorant folly, but they will treat this aspect of European politics from a crusading point of view. They believe in nationality as if it were a religion. I can only regard it as one of the greatest international forces which it would be folly to disregard.²³

Balfour, whose views had not changed since writing his war aims memorandum in the autumn of 1916, thought that a separate peace was impossible and that negotiations with the Austrians were dangerous as well as useless.²⁴ In replying to Drummond's memorandum Hardinge wrote:

'It must be remembered, in considering this question, that no peace can

²² Cecil minute GT43, 19 Feb. 1917, Cab. 24-6.

²³ Cecil to St. Loe Strachey, 13 Nov. 1917, F.O. 800-196.

²⁴ Balfour minute, 11 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3079-7661. Thornton diary, 28 Mar. 1917, Milner Mss. 299. Imperial war cabinet minutes, printed in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920, vol.II, p.19. Roskill, Hankey, p.401.

be satisfactory for Great Britain which does not successfully bar the road to Germany towards the East.²⁵ This idea which had been originally suggested by Masaryk was now accepted within the foreign office as an axiom of British policy in eastern Europe.²⁶ But the foreign office, despite the preferences of many of its members, was at least prepared to attempt to achieve this aim by a method which would be fundamentally unacceptable to Masaryk and his colleagues.

The possibility of negotiations with Austria-Hungary arose again in April 1917 when Prince Sixte de Bourbon presented to the French government a letter from his brother-in-law, the Emperor Karl, expressing his desire for a negotiated peace.²⁷ The letter did not mention a separate peace, but was vague enough to allow that interpretation by those who had a weakness for wishful thinking. Lloyd George enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity presented by this letter, and at the Allied conference on April 19, 1917, at St. Jean de Maurienne, discussed the issue of negotiations for a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. His hopes that the letter might lead to negotiations were destroyed, however, by Sonnino's opposition.²⁸ Although Lloyd George at first refused to abandon this opportunity for negotiations, continued Italian opposition prevented any response to the emperor's letter.²⁹

²⁵ Hardinge minute GT43, 17 Feb. 1917, Cab. 24-6.

²⁶ See above, p. 120.

²⁷ Ribot, Letters, pp.246-258. D. Lloyd George, The War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, London 1938, vol.II, pp.1182-1184.

²⁸ Minutes of the conference of St. Jean de Maurienne, 19 April 1917, F.O. 371-3082-85598. Roskill, Hankey, p.378.

²⁹ Hardinge to Paget, 11 May 1917, F.O. 271-2863-93098. Ribot to Lloyd George, 12 May 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F50-1-5. Lloyd George to Ribot, 15 May 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F50-1-6. Ribot to Lloyd George, 20 May 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F50-1-7. Lloyd George to Ribot, 23 May 1917, F.O. 371-3134-88265.

Like many others Lloyd George saw a separate peace as the solution to Allied military problems, but it is doubtful whether he saw it as anything more. On May 9, 1917, he told the war cabinet: 'If we failed to induce Austria to make a separate peace, he could see no hope of that sort of victory in the war that we desired.' At this meeting it was agreed that: 'our diplomacy should, if possible, be used to assist the military situation, and that if Russia should go out of the war, every possible effort should be made to secure compensation by a separate peace with Austria.'³⁰ Having stated his preference in 1916 for the destruction of the Habsburg monarchy, Lloyd George now showed no concern for its preservation.³¹ At the same time he was equally unconcerned about the subject nationalities, to whom he seldom referred. At a meeting of the war cabinet on June 8, 1917, he stated, in reference to the possibility of detaching Bulgaria from the Central powers:

Peace with Bulgaria should not be difficult to arrange, if only the Serbs would carry out their threat to walk into the Austrian camp. Personally he would not regard this as a misfortune if it resulted in Austria's dependence on Slav races instead of on Germans, but he believed he stood alone in this view.³²

Lloyd George refused to recognize that the government had any formal commitment to Serbia despite the promises Grey had made in 1915.³³ Since Grey had acted on his own authority without consulting the cabinet, his promises could now be repudiated.³⁴ If Lloyd George was indifferent to

³⁰ War cabinet 135a, 9 May 1917, Cab. 23-13.

³¹ See above, pp.151-52 . V.S. Mamatey, The United States and East Central Europe, 1914-1918: A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda, Princeton 1957, p.59.

³² War cabinet, 8 June 1917, Cab. 23-16.

³³ Imperial war cabinet minutes, printed in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920, vol.II, p.19.

³⁴ See above, pp.51-52.

the cause of Serbia, that country which, in his own words, was one of the 'vessels by which ... [God] ... carries the choicest wines to the lips of humanity,' that nation which he so admired because it reminded him of the Welsh, it is not surprising that he failed to consider the other nationalities.³⁵ The factor that inspired Lloyd George to enthusiasm about a separate peace was strategic necessity resulting from the decline of Russia.³⁶ On June 21, 1917, he told the cabinet committee on war policy: 'If Russia went out of the war while Austria still remained in we could not win. If the Eastern Armies of Germany were released we should have no chance of eventual victory.'³⁷ Although there were disagreements on how the negotiations with Austria-Hungary should be conducted, most of the individuals associated with the war cabinet, like Curzon, Smuts, Hankey, Robertson, Major General Sir Frederick Maurice, the director of military operations, and Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, the first sea lord, agreed with Lloyd George on the need for a separate peace.³⁸ None of these individuals had ever shown the slightest interest in, or even knowledge of, eastern Europe, and when a separate peace was first contemplated they showed no particular interest in the terms upon which it might be negotiated. Curzon thought that the only vital British interest in Europe was the independence of Belgium.³⁹ The strongest advocates of

³⁵ Lloyd George, speech at Queen's Hall, The Times, 21 Sept. 1914.

³⁶ Scott diary, 26-30 Jan. 1917, Scott Mss.50903. Lloyd George to Ribot, 15 May 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F50-1-6. Lloyd George to Ribot, 23 May 1917, F.O. 371-3134-88265.

³⁷ Cabinet committee on war policy, 21 June 1917, Cab. 1-27-1.

³⁸ Thornton diary, 24 Mar. 1917, Milner Mss.299. War cabinet 121, 17 April 1917, Cab. 23-2.

³⁹ Imperial war cabinet, committee on territorial desiderata of peace, 23 April 1917, Cab. 29-1-17.

a separate peace were either military technicians like Hankey and Robertson, or imperialists like Smuts and Curzon who believed that the future of eastern Europe was one of the least important considerations for the British government. Viscount Milner, a member of the war cabinet, represented the imperialist position and was the exception among his colleagues in considering the subject nationalities. He supported endeavours to seek a separate peace and like Cecil was dubious about the value of national self-determination. According to the historian Sidney Low, Milner told him that:

Regards the creation - as part of the war settlement - of Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, enlarged Rumania, as impracticable. Very doubtful if these changes are in themselves desirable, but if they are, should be left for a post-war settlement.... We did not go to war for Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia or Rumanians, or Poles. We ought to try to make arrangements for their autonomy and etc; but we ought not to insist that we will go on fighting till their aspirations are satisfied, that is till Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria are disintegrated.

After the conversation Low noted: 'I gather that this is Milner's personal view; but that he has not yet got his colleagues to agree to it.'⁴⁰ On April 11, 1917, Leopold Amery, the assistant secretary of the war cabinet, wrote a memorandum for the imperial war cabinet's committee on the territorial terms of peace. Amery was one of Milner's followers, but while agreeing with him that the British empire should be the primary consideration of the government, he did not share Milner's indifference to the future of eastern Europe. Amery pointed out that if Germany controlled eastern Europe it would have a stronger base from which to attack the Empire. He concluded, therefore, in reference to central

⁴⁰ D. Chapman-Huston, The Lost Historian: A Memoir of Sir Sidney Low, London 1936, pp.267-268, 28 Mar. 1917.

Europe and the Balkans:

That the whole of this region should remain under the direct control of the enemy Powers is not consistent with our safety or with our obligations towards our Allies. But the particular mode in which the problems of this region are solved is not a vital British interest.

This was, in fact, a reasonably accurate statement of the policy that the government was in the process of following. Amery considered that the maximum realization of the wishes and the ideals of the Allies would include an independent Poland, a Yugoslav state formed by uniting the South Slav areas of Austria-Hungary to Serbia and the creation of a Czechoslovak state. He foresaw difficulties in carrying out this policy because of the impossibility of creating ethnographically homogeneous national states in eastern Europe, and because these national states might not, in the existing economic and geographic situation, be self-sufficient. Since the Allies were unprepared to fight until these aims were achieved, and since failure to secure a complete victory might necessitate a compromise peace, these aims might have to be reduced or abandoned. Amery never doubted that if some aims had to be abandoned it would be in the best interests of Britain to abandon those in eastern Europe so that its aims elsewhere could be achieved. Although Amery did not specify to what extent the aims in eastern Europe should be reduced, he speculated that, if necessary, autonomy for Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia would be acceptable.⁴¹ In a later memorandum Amery developed further Drummond's idea of a reconstituted Habsburg monarchy by suggesting that Rumania and Serbia might be added to the Habsburg dominions to form

⁴¹ Amery, 'Possible Terms of Peace', 11 April 1917, Cab. 29-1.

a large middle European federation.⁴² Although Amery considered such solutions acceptable in terms of British interests, he did not suggest that they were the most desirable solution to the problems of eastern Europe. He was also extremely pessimistic about the possibility of negotiations for he saw no evidence that Austria-Hungary wanted a separate peace, and believed that as the situation in Austria-Hungary deteriorated that country would only become more dependent upon Germany.⁴³ The imperial war cabinet's committee on the territorial terms of peace accepted Amery's basic statement on British policy in eastern Europe, but carefully avoided any statement of specific aims. It concluded that:

As regards the settlement of the Alsace-Lorraine, Polish and Austro-Hungarian questions, the precise mode in which the object is to be achieved is a matter which, in the main, concerns our Allies more than ourselves. The principal British interest in the settlement to be aimed at is that, while it should effectively reduce the military power and resources of the Central Powers, it should correspond as far as possible with the wishes of the populations concerned, and be inherently stable and calculated to promote a lasting peace.

This general statement left the government free to adjust its war aims whenever it chose to the realities of the strategic situation. The committee also stated: 'In Eastern Europe the Committee have been impressed with the extreme importance of securing an effective barrier to the extension of German power and influence, both political, economic and commercial, over the Near East.'⁴⁴ The editor of the Manchester Guardian, C.P. Scott, who was very close to Lloyd George, had his own opinion about the tendency of officials, like Drummond and Amery, to

⁴² Amery, 'The Russian Situation and Its Consequences', 20 May 1917, Cab. 24-14.

⁴³ Amery memorandum, 10 July 1917, Milner Mss. 108-1.

⁴⁴ Imperial war cabinet, 28 April 1917, Cab. 29-1-17.

speculate on the terms of peace:

My own view as to the government's policy was that all the talk as to particular terms was at bottom insincere and that the one condition which to the mind of the government was fundamental was a military victory - not necessarily the "knock-out blow" of which L.L.G. prated, but still something sufficient to break the prestige of the German military autocracy.⁴⁵

Failing to convince the Italians to agree to negotiations with Austria-Hungary, Lloyd George adopted a plan by which he believed that Italian objections could eventually be overcome. He proposed that the British and French armies should participate in a major offensive against the Austrians on the Italian front in order to wrest from Austria-Hungary those areas, like Trieste, most coveted by the Italians. The failure of the Nivelle offensive in the spring of 1917 undoubtedly reinforced the strategic arguments for a separate peace while increasing Lloyd George's dislike of the dominant view of the Allied strategists that the war had to be won on the western front. Once the areas coveted by Italy were in the possession of the Allies, the Austrians might be more willing to make concessions to Italy, and the Italians, with greater assurance that their essential desiderata would be fulfilled, might be more willing to undertake negotiations.⁴⁶

At an Allied conference on July 26, 1917, Lloyd George:

pointed out that if the Russians collapse, Roumania's collapse was also inevitable, and that in such circumstances it would be very difficult to exact the claims of the Entente's Eastern Allies against Austria. This rendered it more desirable to concentrate on the claims of Italy, who was co-operating with us to her full extent.... If we still continued in the expectation of winning Galicia, Bukovina, Banat, Temesvar,

⁴⁵ Scott diary, 24 August 1917, Scott MSS. 50904.

⁴⁶ Cabinet committee on war policy, 21 June 1917, Cab. 1-27-1. Cabinet committee on war policy, 10 Aug. 1917, Lloyd George MS. F161-2. Lloyd George to Robertson, 26 Aug. 1917, Lloyd George MS. F30-2-24. Robertson, 20 June 1917, Lloyd George MS. F161-2.

Transylvania, and all the Serbian claims, we really were lacking the courage to face the facts. ⁴⁷

The fatal flaw in the plan was that by subordinating military considerations to diplomacy, even if the diplomacy were ultimately based on strategic necessity, opposition from the war office was almost inevitable. Despite Lloyd George's vigorous campaigning for this change in Allied strategy, it was never accepted by the Allied governments because of the British and French military authorities' opposition to shifting the military emphasis away from the western front. As a result, one of the major obstacles to a separate peace, the incompatibility between Austrian and Italian aims, still could not be overcome. Any possibility that this solution might be adopted later was destroyed by the overwhelming defeat of the Italian army at Caporetto late in October 1917.

During the autumn of 1917 the strategic situation deteriorated further. The Russian offensive in Galicia which began in July 1917 had failed and it was obvious that little more could be expected from the Russian army. The British government now had to consider the possibility that Russia might withdraw entirely from the war. There was little doubt that such an act would make total victory, and possibly any victory, impossible. ⁴⁸ The campaign on the western front which the war office had favoured in preference to a major offensive in Italy had failed to produce results which might offset the deterioration of the eastern front. During the late summer and autumn the government continued to receive reports about the worsening of conditions in Austria-Hungary and of the Austrian desire

⁴⁷ Allied conference, 26 July 1917, Cab. 28-2-24.

⁴⁸ Allied conference, 8 Aug. 1917, Cab. 28-2-25. War cabinet, 24 Sept. 1917, Cab. 23-16.

for a negotiated peace, but it received no actual approaches from Austrian agents.⁴⁹ In this situation the government avoided all statements of war aims and awaited Austrian approaches.⁵⁰ A certain reserve marked the government's relations with the various subject nationalities who vainly attempted to pressure it into making a statement on national self-determination.⁵¹

The degree of pessimism which existed in government circles about the future course of the war can be seen in the discussions of the war cabinet. At a meeting on August 14, 1917, Lloyd George explained how he would conduct negotiations with Austria-Hungary. According to Hankey's own cryptic notes, Lloyd George said: 'Begin with Italy; then Serbia; if you have agreement you put up your fight on Roumania. If it comes to pt [point] would have no hesitation.'⁵² One must assume that Lloyd George meant that he would not hesitate to abandon Rumania. If he was prepared to overlook formal commitments, what could the Poles, Czechs and Yugoslavs expect from a separate peace?⁵³ By September 1917 the government was so pessimistic that it began to consider negotiations with Germany in which it would have to abandon eastern Europe to the Central powers in exchange for concessions in western Europe. At a meeting of the war cabinet on September 24, 1917, at which it was decided to receive any approaches from the Germans, Lloyd George stated: 'If we

⁴⁹ Hall memorandum GT1324, 7 July 1917, Cab. 24-19. War cabinet committee on war policy, 10 Aug. 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F161-2. Rumbold to Bertie, 12 Sept. 1917, F.O. 800-161.

⁵⁰ War cabinet, 16 July 1917, Cab.23-3. War cabinet, 27 Sept.1917, Cab.23-16.

⁵¹ Clerk to Hardinge, 26 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-2864-207244.

⁵² War cabinet, 14 Aug. 1917, Cab.23-16. Roskill, Hankey, pp.635-636.

⁵³ War cabinet, 24 Sept.1917, Cab.23-16. War cabinet, 27 Sept.1917, Cab.23-16.

came to the conclusion that the Soviet was going to destroy our prospects of success, then Russia ought to pay the penalty.'⁵⁴ Nothing came of this willingness to negotiate with Germany, but it was to remain a possible alternative which the government would not reject out of hand. There can be no doubt that in such negotiations conducted at the expense of Russia and eastern Europe, negotiations in which the British would have to abandon their one essential aim of a barrier to the German Drang nach Osten, the subject nationalities would also be abandoned.

During this period the foreign office became more sceptical about a separate peace. On August 22, 1917, Nicolson wrote that a separate peace was impossible but recommended that:

we should consider the possibility of entertaining negotiations with these Austrian Representatives from the point of view, not of detaching Austria from the Alliance (which is impossible) but of placing the German Government in a position which it would be difficult for them to justify either to their own people or to their Allies. ⁵⁵

Oliphant, Graham, Hardinge and Clerk shared Nicolson's estimate of the impossibility of a separate peace, and began to look upon negotiations not as a means to achieve a real settlement, but as a weapon to embarrass and weaken the Central alliance.⁵⁶ This idea had also occurred to the war office.⁵⁷ On October 31, 1917, the government was presented with another opportunity for negotiations with Austria-Hungary when it was informed by Horace Rumbold, the minister in Berne, of an Austrian request

⁵⁴ War cabinet, 24 Sept. 1917, Cab. 23-16.

⁵⁵ Nicolson memorandum, 22 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-2864-164751.

⁵⁶ Oliphant, Graham, Hardinge minutes, 23 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-2864-164751. Clerk minute, 27 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-2864-155578. Hardinge to Townley, 30 Nov. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 35.

⁵⁷ General staff memorandum, 7 July 1917, W.O. 106-1516.

that the government send a representative for official conversations about peace.⁵⁸ The government responded by sending Smuts, one of the most enthusiastic advocates of a separate peace, to Switzerland in December 1917 for discussions with Count Mensdorff, the former Austrian ambassador in London. This opportunity did nothing to allay the pessimism of the foreign office. Nicolson, expressing the views of his colleagues, wrote that Austria-Hungary had only two alternatives - destruction or subservience to Germany. He added that while Austria-Hungary desired a negotiated peace it showed no desire for a separate peace.⁵⁹ Balfour was particularly concerned about the risks involved and for that reason opposed negotiations. On December 15, 1917, he explained the difficulty of conducting any negotiations:

If we make proposals fully satisfactory to all our Allies, they will be regarded as utterly unreasonable by all our enemies. If, on the other hand, we make tentative qualifications in their extreme demands, and the negotiations nevertheless break down (as I rather think they will), then we shall have given a most powerful instrument into the hands of our foes for making mischief between us and our friends.⁶⁰

On December 29, 1917, Balfour wrote to Cecil about the cabinet discussion of war aims:

There was the usual endless talk about defining War Aims, - a problem in which I take no great interest, because, as it seems to me, there is not the slightest difficulty in defining what ends we want to attain by the war. [Balfour still adhered to the views expressed in his war aims memorandum in 1916.] The real difficulty is to find out how far we shall be able to attain them, and how far our Allies are prepared to fight till they are attained; - and no amount of defining will help us to solve these problems.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Roskill, Hankey, pp.467-70. F.O. to Rumbold, 26 Nov.1917, F.O. 371-2864-224082.

⁵⁹ Nicolson memorandum, 5 Dec.1917, F.O.371-3086-230895. Oliphant, Graham, Hardinge and Clerk minutes, 10 Dec.1917, F.O.371-3086-230895. Gregory minute, 18 Dec.1917, F.O.371-3002-238348.

⁶⁰ Balfour memorandum, 15 Dec.1917, F.O.800-241. Balfour to Lansdowne, 22 Nov.1917, Cab.24-34.

⁶¹ Balfour to Cecil, 29 Dec.1917, Balfour MSS.49783.

Balfour feared that the negotiations could not be kept secret and that they would discourage the lesser Allies.⁶² Subsequent events showed that it was impossible to maintain the secrecy of the Smuts-Mensdorff conversations.⁶³ He understood and sympathized with the attitude of the subject nationalities, later writing to House: 'Various Slav peoples have so often been fooled by phrase "self-government" that they will be disposed to regard all schemes which are so described as giving them old slavery under a new name.' In the same letter he gave another reason for opposing negotiations:

The future of the war largely depends on supporting Italian enthusiasm and on maintaining anti-German zeal of Slav populations in Austria. Both Italians and Slavs are very easily discouraged and are quick to find evidence in foreign speeches that their interests are forgotten or betrayed. I fear Austrian statesmanship will not be above using any indication that President had a tenderness for Austrian Empire as a means of convincing Slavs that having nothing to hope for from the Allies they had best make terms with Central Powers.⁶⁴

Balfour's warnings were to no avail because the government, in the pursuit of peace, was prepared to undertake such risks. His opposition, justified by the information available to the foreign office and by subsequent events, only made him and the foreign office unpopular among the optimistic advocates of a separate peace, like Hankey and Milner, who thought Balfour incompetent.⁶⁵ Such optimism was not entirely dead within the foreign office for Cecil and Drummond still favoured negotiations.⁶⁶

⁶² Balfour to Lloyd George, 10 Dec. 1917, F.O. 800-199.

⁶³ Rumbold to F.O., 3 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-2002. Rumbold to F.O., 20 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-12697.

⁶⁴ Balfour to House, 27 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800-222.

⁶⁵ Milner to Paget, 16 Oct. 1917, Paget Mss. 51257. Thornton Diary, 28 Oct. 1917, Milner Mss. 301. Roskill, Hankey, p.467.

⁶⁶ Cecil to Lloyd George, 5 Dec. 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F6-5-10. Cecil to Balfour, 28 Dec. 1917, F.O. 800-207.

On December 10, 1917, Drummond wrote another memorandum on possible terms of peace which showed that his views had changed since February 1917.⁶⁷ He now maintained that the establishment of independent Slavic states would no longer achieve the primary aim of barring the German Drang nach Osten since, with the complete collapse of Russia, they would lack support from the rear. Such a barrier could be established only by a reconstituted Habsburg monarchy which would include the autonomous states of Bohemia, Poland and Yugoslavia, including Serbia. Although anticipated in rather vague terms by Amery, Drummond's recommendation on Poland was an innovation because the Polish question had been considered, prior to the collapse of Russia, as separate and distinct from the Austrian question. Hardinge, Gregory and probably others in the foreign office found these terms acceptable, but there is no evidence that the foreign office agreed with Drummond that this was the best solution to the problems of eastern Europe.⁶⁸ Although Clerk did not express his opinion on the whole programme, he did comment on the Polish proposal: 'If the Poles themselves adopt this policy, well and good, but it is so completely opposed to all our public assurances - and in my humble opinion to our real interests - that any such move on our part would have a deplorable effect.'⁶⁹

Regardless of the foreign office, the government was determined to send Smuts to Switzerland. The intention of the Bolsheviks to make peace undoubtedly contributed to the government's pacificism which now reached its zenith and increased the cabinet's desire to find a diplomatic solution

⁶⁷ Drummond memorandum GT 2976, 10 Dec. 1917, Cab. 24-35.

⁶⁸ Hardinge minute GT 2976, 10 Dec. 1917, Cab. 24-35. Hardinge minute, 23 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-14351. Gregory minute, 26 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-16767.

⁶⁹ Clerk minute, 23 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3133-14351.

to its strategic problems. On December 28, 1917, Lloyd George told Scott:

I warn you that I am in a very pacifist temper. If people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don't know, and can't know.... The thing is horrible and beyond human nature to bear and I feel I can't go on with this bloody business: I would rather resign 70

Before his departure Smuts set out the basis upon which he intended to conduct his discussions with Mensdorff.⁷¹ His proposals were similar to those already made by Drummond as he believed that, in the absence of Russia, Austria-Hungary was a necessary counterweight to Germany. The reconstituted Habsburg monarchy envisaged by Smuts would include an autonomous Poland and possibly an autonomous Yugoslavia including Serbia. This last point would be reserved for discussions between Austria and Serbia and the latter would only be guaranteed restoration but not acquisition of Bosnia, Herzegovina or part of Dalmatia. Smuts forgot Bohemia. As the object of his mission he sought to split the Central powers so that Austria would either make a separate peace or support the Allies against Germany in negotiations for a general peace. At their meeting, when Mensdorff asked him about the implication in the reply to President Wilson that the Allies intended to break up Austria-Hungary, Smuts responded: 'that note never had had such an intention, and that its object, and still more our object now, was to assist Austria to give the greatest freedom and autonomy to her subject nationalities.'⁷² The Smuts-Mensdorff conversations confirmed the foreign office's pessimism about a separate peace because Mensdorff refused to discuss the subject,

⁷⁰ Scott diary, 28 Dec. 1917, Scott MSS. 50904.

⁷¹ Smuts, 'Peace Conversations', 13 Dec. 1917, F.O. 800-214.

⁷² Smuts memorandum, 18-19 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-2864-246162. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, p.2461.

confining his remarks exclusively to a general peace. Smuts, not permitted to discuss a general peace had to confine himself to a very general statement of British intentions towards the future of Austria-Hungary, and so repeated the ideas set out in his earlier memorandum.⁷³ No progress was made towards a settlement and no basis established for further negotiations. The government had correctly assessed the Austrian desire for a negotiated peace but had misinterpreted it as the desire for a separate peace.

In response to the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, the Smuts-Masendorff conversations, and unrest in the labour movement, Lloyd George addressed to the Trade Union Congress, on January 5, 1918, the most important statement of war aims since the reply to President Wilson.⁷⁴ Smuts, Hankey, Cecil and Philip Kerr, a private secretary to Lloyd George, some of the major advocates of a separate peace and the representatives of the most pro-Austrian element in the government, devoted considerable effort to the text of the speech.⁷⁵ In their recommendations, Smuts and Hankey overlooked the subject nationalities.⁷⁶ Cecil suggested stating that the destruction of the monarchy was not a British aim but that the Poles should be given independence and the other nationalities should be given

⁷³ Rumbold to F.O., 20 Dec. 1917, F.O. 800-200. Smuts, 'Peace Preparations', 26 Dec. 1917, Cab. 1-25-27. War cabinet, 2 Jan. 1918, Cab. 23-16. Balfour to Wilson (draft), 28 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3133-3465.

⁷⁴ War cabinet 313, 3 Jan. 1918, Cab. 23-5. Ormesby Gore to Hankey, 1 Jan. 1918, Lloyd George Ms. F23-2-1. Henderson to Lloyd George, 20 Dec. 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F27-3-22. Guest to Lloyd George, 13 Dec. 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F21-2-10.

⁷⁵ Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918, London 1961, pp.734-8. Roskill, Hankey, p.479. Malcolm to Balfour, 5 Jan. 1918, Balfour Mss. 49748.

⁷⁶ Smuts, 'War Aims', GT3180, 3 Jan. 1918, Cab. 24-37. War cabinet 308, 31 Dec. 1917, Cab. 23-13.

self-government.⁷⁷ All that Kerr recommended on this subject was a statement that:

They [the Allies] also feel that a settlement of the racial problem of South Eastern Europe on the basis that the various nationalities therein contained should be as far as possible grouped in autonomous units with securities for religious and language rights of minorities to be an essential of lasting peace. As to the relations which exist between these national entities they have no fixed ideas, provided they are not brought under the political and military domination of Berlin. ⁷⁸

In the actual speech Lloyd George warned the Russians that if they made a separate peace, Britain would not fight to restore their losses. He also told the Austrians that his government had no desire for the destruction of the Habsburg monarchy.⁷⁹ According to the war cabinet minutes: 'His main object was to give a clear indication to Austria that we did not wish to destroy her, and to make her people lukewarm in the war, thus deterring her from using her strength actively against us.'⁸⁰ A statement that a strong Austria was desirable had been considered but rejected. Following Cecil's recommendation Lloyd George also stated: 'We believe, however, that an independent Poland, comprising all those genuinely Polish elements who desire to form part of it, is an urgent necessity for the stability of Western Europe.' At a meeting of the war cabinet on January 3, 1918, Lloyd George said: 'Some reference ought to be made in our statement to such races as the Italians, Croats, Slovaks, Czechs, and etc. who are under Austrian rule, and who seek some form of autonomy.'⁸¹ In the speech he stated:

⁷⁷ Cecil memorandum, 3 Jan. 1918, Cab. 24-37.

⁷⁸ Kerr memorandum, 29 Dec. 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F89-1-12.

⁷⁹ 'The Prime Minister's Speech', 5 Jan. 1918, F.O. 800-199.

⁸⁰ War cabinet 314, 4 Jan. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

⁸¹ War cabinet 312, 3 Jan. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

Similarly, though we agree with President Wilson that the breakup of Austria-Hungary is no part of our war aims, we feel that, unless genuine self-government on true democratic principles is granted to those Austro-Hungarian nationalities who have long desired it, it is impossible to hope for the removal of those causes of unrest in that part of Europe which have so long threatened its general peace.

If compared with the reply to President Wilson, this speech gave the definite impression that the government was backtracking on its previous statements, and that it was prepared to abandon the subject nationalities. The speech was so interpreted, with complete justification, by the émigrés.⁸² But the previous statement had been propaganda, directed at the American public, which reflected certain preferences within the government but not a policy that it was determined to follow. If anything, it had represented the government's maximum programme but not one to which it was committed. The speech to the Trade Union Congress represented the government's minimum programme and was, therefore, more indicative of government policy. The statements in the speech on the subject nationalities involved no commitment, and Lloyd George made it quite clear that the destruction of the monarchy was not a British war aim. But neither did he commit himself to its survival. The speech accurately reflected the dominant trend of government thought throughout 1917 on the future of eastern Europe. It stands out because, following the reply to President Wilson, it was the first precise public statement by the government showing its willingness to accept less than national self-determination. This speech indicated the strength of the government's desire for a negotiated peace in that it risked alienating the subject nationalities whose support might be necessary for the successful conduct of the war.

⁸² Cecil to Des Graz, 9 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-6573. Horodyski to Keynes, 10 Jan. 1918, F.O. 800-385. Milner to Cecil, 11 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-8527.

Despite the failure of the Smuts mission the government did not, as shown by Lloyd George's speech, abandon the idea of negotiations with Austria-Hungary. Smuts, Hankey and Milner remained incurable optimists. Lloyd George, however, began to agree with the foreign office that a separate peace was impossible and that negotiations could only be used as a weapon to weaken the Austrian war effort.⁸³ After February 1918 many who had supported the pursuit of a separate peace became pessimistic and began to lose interest. On February 15, 1918, Cecil wrote: 'My own impression is that we should do well to hold our hands so far as Austria is concerned, and allow events to produce their inevitable effect in that country.'⁸⁴

In March 1918 the government made another attempt to begin negotiations. Kerr was sent to Switzerland to meet another Austrian agent in an attempt to follow up the Smuts-Mensdorff conversations.⁸⁵ As in the previous case, Kerr's mission failed to establish any basis for further negotiations because the Austrian agent refused to discuss a separate peace.⁸⁶ Kerr only succeeded in confirming the results of the Smuts mission. On March 21, 1918, the Germans launched their great offensive on the western front, and the sheer force of events began to overtake the idea of a separate peace. When Horace Rumbold, the minister in Berne, suggested, on

⁸³ Roskill, Hankey, pp.503-7. War cabinet, 4 Feb. 1918, Cab. 23-16. Milner to Lloyd George, 27 Feb. 1918, Lloyd George Ms. F38-3-16.

⁸⁴ Cecil to Findlay, 15 Feb. 1918, Cecil Mss. 51091.

⁸⁵ Hankey to Lloyd George, 2 Mar. 1918, Cab. 23-16. Balfour to Kerr, 6 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-41211. F.O. to Rumbold, 6 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-41211.

⁸⁶ Rumbold to F.O., 11 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-45538. Rumbold to F.O., 14 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-47443. Kerr report, 19 Mar. 1918, Cab. 1-26-10.

March 26, 1918, that if approached again by an Austrian agent he should reject the idea of future conversations, the foreign office approved.⁸⁷ The British government now ceased to pursue actively negotiations with Austria-Hungary, although the desire and the willingness to make a separate peace on the terms already discussed still remained.⁸⁸ But the government, unable to solve its strategic problems by negotiations with Austria-Hungary, now began to turn to the alternative it had always maintained.

During 1917 the primary British policy relevant to the future of eastern Europe was the pursuit of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. It was not a policy designed for the future of eastern Europe but one produced by military necessity. Since Austria-Hungary would never negotiate for a separate peace, the foreign office was correct in thinking the policy impossible. In seeking a separate peace the government was pursuing a mirage. But even if Austria-Hungary had wanted such a peace there is good reason to assume that it would not have been able to detach itself from Germany. For the Allies the problem of Italian opposition to discussions with Austria-Hungary remained unsolved. Even the military advantages of a separate peace, never disputed within the government, are subject to some doubt. If the Austrians withdrew from the war, the Yugoslavs, Czechoslovaks, Poles, Serbians, Rumanians and Italians might follow their example, and the blockade of Germany would be broken. The Allies would still be faced with their major problem of defeating the German army on the western front. Throughout the war the British

⁸⁷ Rumbold to F.O., 26 Mar. 1918, F.O. to Rumbold, 28 Mar. 1918, F.O.371-3133-55733.

⁸⁸ War cabinet, 15 April 1918, Cab. 23-16.

government sought painless solutions which would produce a quick victory. This tendency was dangerous, involving as it did attempts to by-pass the unavoidable problem of defeating the German army on the western front. Such was the pursuit of a separate peace. But even had the policy been successful it is uncertain whether the Allies would have derived from it the benefit they supposed. The government did not have a good record, considering its previous expectations of Italy and Rumania, in estimating military advantages.

There can be absolutely no doubt that the strategic situation was the primary reason why the government sought a separate peace. Military considerations, as the determining factors, overrode the preferences within the government. Many advocates of a separate peace, like Hankey and Robertson, showed no interest whatever in the future structure of eastern Europe. Others, however - Milner, Smuts, Cecil and eventually Drummond - did prefer maintaining the Habsburg monarchy. But they did not propose this as a solution to the problems of eastern Europe until after the government sought negotiations which would obviously result in the survival of Austria-Hungary. They might be suspected of merely rationalizing the anticipated results of a policy already agreed upon for other reasons. Never at any time did they suggest that negotiations should be conducted for the precise purpose of saving the Habsburg monarchy. Like those with a preference for national self-determination, they did not campaign enthusiastically for their preference, which in any case was conditional upon a definite assurance that the monarchy would become anti-German. That assurance could only be given by Austria-Hungary deserting its ally, and if that did not happen, even the pro-Austrian advocates of a separate peace assumed that Britain would let events take their own course. Those

who stated a preference for the survival of Austria-Hungary were influential within the government, but not decisive. In a government headed by Lloyd George, who did not share this preference, the pro-Austrian group cannot be said to have determined policy. During 1917 the discussions on the future of eastern Europe show that the government was not in favour of preserving the Habsburg monarchy but was conditionally willing to accept its survival as being consistent with British interests. That position can be seen in British policy from the very beginning of the war, and was precisely expressed in Lloyd George's speech to the Trade Union Congress. The preference within the government for the maintenance of the Habsburg monarchy had as little influence on British policy during 1917 as the much stronger preference for national self-determination had had between 1914 and 1916. The government remained uncommitted to either the preservation or destruction of the Habsburg monarchy, and prepared to accept whichever alternative contributed most to the conduct of the war.

Most of those who preferred national self-determination accepted the idea of a separate peace because it might shorten the war. Only the intelligence bureau opposed a separate peace because of national self-determination, but it had no significant influence on policy. Opposition within the foreign office was based not on national self-determination but on other considerations. Among the policy makers, the cause of the subject nationalities was never considered or suggested as an obstacle to a separate peace. The speculation on the possibility of autonomy for these nationalities must be dismissed as fantasy designed either to save the government's face or soothe guilty consciences. It is more than probable that the Habsburg government would never have accepted dictation on its own internal affairs and that the Allies would not have insisted on

autonomy had agreement been reached on other issues. Even if Austria-Hungary had accepted such conditions there is no reason to assume that they would have been implemented. The Allies would not have resumed hostilities with Austria-Hungary for the sake of the subject nationalities.

On January 2, 1918, Cecil wrote:

I am afraid I attach very little importance to the Emperor Karl's alleged Liberal leanings. Even supposing them to be not only sincere but enduring, Autocrats and their Ministers have very little power. The policy of Austria-Hungary will always be the policy of its German and Magyar populations. ⁸⁹

During 1917, while the government sought a separate peace, its relations with the nationality organizations continued along lines already well established by the end of 1916. In most cases the pursuit of a separate peace, which definitely had priority over the cause of the nationalities, did not affect relations between the government and the nationality organizations. The government continued to use the nationalities as weapons of war, and in some cases, developed what were already standard practices even further. The major effect of the pursuit of a separate peace in the government's relations with the nationalities was that of reinforcing the quite natural desire to avoid commitments on national self-determination. As long as a separate peace seemed possible the government would not undertake commitments which would hamper or preclude negotiations. This unwillingness to undertake commitments limited but did not prevent the use of the nationalities. By maintaining its close relationship with the nationalities the government reserved the alternative of using them against the Central powers if it failed to use Austria-Hungary against Germany.

⁸⁹ Cecil minute, 2 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-3465.

By the end of 1916 the government was using the nationality organizations extensively in the production and distribution of propaganda, particularly in the United States.⁹⁰ In January 1917, following his return from the United States where, on behalf of the government, he had worked on the recruiting of American Poles for the Canadian army and the political organization of the Polish-Americans, Horodyski recommended to Drummond that greater organization was needed in the distribution of propaganda in the United States.⁹¹ At this time Wellington House was distributing propaganda through the Bohemian National Alliance, the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Information Committee and possibly other organizations. To some extent these activities were supervised by Gaunt in New York and by Namier in London.⁹² Probably as a result of this suggestion, although evidence on this subject is extremely scarce, the Bohemian National Alliance established the Slav Press Bureau under the directorship of Voska sometime before June 1917.⁹³ It seems that this organization was designed to co-ordinate the distribution of British propaganda among the nationality organizations in the United States. It would be reasonable for the government to use the Czechs, the most trusted and reliable of the nationalities, for work among the other nationalities in the United States. Although it is impossible to determine precisely when the organization was established, it had already, by June 1917,

⁹⁰ See Chapter III.

⁹¹ Drummond minute, 18 Jan. 1917, F.O. 800-384.

⁹² Namier to Koppel, 31 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-75-68868. Roxborough to Namier, 26 June 1917, F.O. 395-67-124735.

⁹³ Bayley to F.O., 22 June 1917, F.O. 395-67-124735. Wiseman memorandum, 30 June 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-112. Voska, Spy, p.103. Capek, Cechs, p.272.

distributed at least 40,000 pamphlets.⁹⁴ During this period the Czechs continued to be a useful source of information and even expanded their distribution of pamphlets to include various eastern European communities in South America.⁹⁵

The American election in November 1916 showed that a counterweight to the German-American vote was no longer necessary, and the later American declaration of war ended the problem of German plots in the United States. Nevertheless, British propaganda in the United States continued; first to maintain public support to reinforce the government's benevolent neutrality, and later to promote American determination to fight the war vigorously to its conclusion. But the propaganda changed in two important respects. During the first years of the war British propaganda was directed against Germany but had the effect, though not the aim, of bringing eastern Europe to the attention of the American public. In 1917 educating the Americans on the problems of eastern Europe became a primary aim of British propaganda in the hope that American interest in eastern Europe would lead to involvement.⁹⁶ Before 1917 British propaganda had helped the cause of the nationalities without explicitly advocating national self-determination. Following the Entente's reply to President Wilson, which the war cabinet instructed the propaganda agencies to publicize to the fullest extent, and in line with the text of that note, Wellington House now began to campaign for the cause of the

⁹⁴ Bayley to F.O., 22 June 1917, Montgomery to Bayley, 26 June 1917, F.O. 395-67-124735. Ashcroft to Roxborough, 4 July 1917, F.O. 395-78-133102. Thwaites to Butler, 30 Nov. 1917, F.O. 395-85-223899.

⁹⁵ Zelenka to Sykora, 30 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-75-68868. Namier to Butler, 8 Feb. 1917, F.O. 395-108-51960.

⁹⁶ War cabinet 25, 2 Jan. 1917, Cab. 23-1.

nationalities.⁹⁷ The text of the reply was used as a basic guide for the contents of future propaganda, and was interpreted in its maximum sense so that liberation meant complete liberation and not autonomy. For this reason the pamphlets produced during 1917 were far more explicit than their predecessors on the subject of national self-determination: it was now openly advocated as the best solution for the problems of eastern Europe. In A Lasting Peace G.W. Prothero wrote: 'We have therefore stipulated for the emancipation of the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, the Slovaks of Northern Hungary, the Slavs of Croatia and other districts, and their formation into independent States.'⁹⁸ This pamphlet was only one of a number in which the change in the contents of British propaganda can be seen.⁹⁹ Since the government was pursuing a separate peace with Austria-Hungary which would necessitate abandoning national self-determination at exactly the same time that Wellington House was campaigning for that cause, there was an obvious divergence between policy and propaganda which is best explained by insufficient political control over a department in part staffed by sympathizers of the nationalities.

The government's use of émigrés in espionage also continued according to established patterns. In addition to his work in Polish affairs, Horodyski continued as a trusted agent of the foreign office, gathering

⁹⁷ Sloss (Chicago Daily News) to Montgomery, 12 Jan. 1917, F.O. 395-5-247960. Montgomery minute, 6 Jan. 1917, F.O. 395-65-5642. Butler to Montgomery, 22 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-76-63597. News department to Namier, 27 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-76-65520. Butler to Dmowski, 3 April 1917, F.O. 395-76-67726.

⁹⁸ G.W. Prothero, A Lasting Peace, London 1917, p.33.

⁹⁹ L.B. Namier, The Case of Bohemia, London 1917, The Czecho-Slovaks, London 1917.

political information in Europe.¹⁰⁰ Through sources in Switzerland he supplied the government with information on Austria-Hungary and was at times involved in the attempts to initiate negotiations for a separate peace.¹⁰¹ The foreign office considered Horodyski a reliable and useful agent while Drummond, his contact, considered him a personal friend.¹⁰² Although some, like Hankey, disagreed with this estimate, there can be no doubt that in the closeness of his relations with the foreign office Horodyski had a position that was unique among the émigrés.¹⁰³

In the United States the Czechs under Voska continued to work for Wiseman although there is little documentary evidence as to their activities.¹⁰⁴ In May 1917 Wiseman proposed sending American Czechs, Slovaks and Poles to Russia in a joint British and American sponsored venture to combat pacifist propaganda.¹⁰⁵ The American government immediately accepted the plan, but the foreign office hesitated, hoping that the American government would act alone and thereby incur all the risks of exposure. On June 19, 1917 it informed Wiseman: 'Dual control is difficult, and we feel it would be better that we should not in any

¹⁰⁰ Rumbold to Campbell, 6 Dec. 1919, F.O. 800-329. Horodyski travelled with a British passport.

¹⁰¹ Drummond minute, 15 Jan. 1917, F.O. 800-384.

¹⁰² Drummond to Howard, 11 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800-385.

¹⁰³ Roskill, Hankey, p.465. Drummond memorandum, 13 June 1918, F.O. 371-3282-106670.

¹⁰⁴ Agent 45 to embassy, 26 Feb. 1917, F.O. 115-2183. B.N.A. to Lansing, 20 April 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-112. Agent 45, 'Bohemian and Slovak Question', 23 April 1917, Wiseman Mss. 90-7.

¹⁰⁵ Wiseman memorandum, 18 May 1918, Wiseman Mss. 91-112. Osborne to Wiseman, 19 May 1917, Wiseman to Osborne, 24 May 1917, F.O. 115-2322. Wiseman to Drummond, 16 June 1917, F.O. 800-205. Fowler, British-American Relations, pp.111-118.

way appear even unofficially.¹⁰⁶ After being informed that Wilson was interested in the project, and that the Americans would not proceed alone, the foreign office gave its approval and placed \$75,000 at Wiseman's disposal.¹⁰⁷ In trying to convince the foreign office to co-operate Wiseman wrote: 'I do not think that they [the Americans] will proceed unless we participate, because the scheme depends on the help of certain Slav Societies here, with whom the United States Government have no means of dealing without me.'¹⁰⁸ Although he was probably exaggerating his own importance, the statement is a reflection of the intimacy that existed between Wiseman and the nationality organizations.

The mission to Russia was headed by W. Somerset Maugham (code name Somerville), who had been working for M.I.1c in Switzerland, and included Voska, two members of the Bohemian National Alliance and one member of the Slovak League of America.¹⁰⁹ Receipts show that Maugham received at least \$21,000 and Voska \$4,000.¹¹⁰ Through Masaryk, who, assisted by the British government, had travelled to Russia in July 1917 to organize a Czechoslovak army from the Czechoslovak prisoners of war, the mission established contact with the extensive Czechoslovak organization in Russia.¹¹¹ In this organization which comprised an estimated 1200 agencies

¹⁰⁶ F.O. to Wiseman, 19 June 1917, F.O. 800-205.

¹⁰⁷ Wiseman to Drummond, 20 June 1917, F.O. to Wiseman, 25 June 1917, F.O. 800-25.

¹⁰⁸ Wiseman to Drummond, 20 June 1917, F.O. 800-205.

¹⁰⁹ Maugham to Wiseman, 7 July 1917, Voska to Lansing, 13 July 1917, Voska memorandum, 30 June 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-112.

¹¹⁰ Wiseman to Drummond, 22 Aug. 1917, Wiseman Mss. 90-42. Voska receipt, 16 July 1917, Voska receipt, 21 July 1917, Maugham receipt, 18 July 1917, Wiseman memorandum, 12 July 1917, Maugham to Wiseman, 14 July 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-112.

¹¹¹ Hardinge to Hall, 15 May 1917, F.O. 371-3008-96719. S (Maugham) report, 3-16 Sept. 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-112.

with an approximate membership of 70,000, the mission had at its disposal a large and well-disciplined apparatus for the collection of information and distribution of propaganda. Earlier action might have produced worthwhile results but it is probable that when the mission arrived in Russia on September 2, 1917, it was already too late. Maugham was able to indulge in some espionage, but by the time a comprehensive programme was formulated for the distribution of propaganda it was too late to act: the Bolsheviks had seized power.¹¹² On November 4, 1917, Maugham left Russia convinced that the tide in favour of the Bolsheviks was so strong as to make the mission's original aim of counteracting pacifist propaganda in Russia no longer possible.¹¹³ This particular episode but not the use of Czechs in espionage and propaganda came to an end with Maugham's departure.¹¹⁴ There is some evidence which suggests that the government might have made even more extensive use of the émigrés in espionage and propaganda.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Wiseman memorandum, 11 Sept. 1917, House Mss. 20-45.

¹¹³ Wiseman memorandum, 21 Oct. 1917, House Mss. 20-46. Voska memorandum, 6 Nov. 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-112. Wiseman memorandum, 19 Jan. 1918, Wiseman Mss. 91-113. Koukol to B.N.A., 20 Mar. 1918, Wiseman Mss. 91-114.

¹¹⁴ Maugham memorandum, 18 Nov. 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F60-2-36. Maugham described his work for the secret service in a novel entitled Ashenden, or the British Agent, London 1927. It contains six stories one of which deals with his work in Russia. Originally there were twenty Ashenden stories but fourteen were never published, on the insistence of Churchill, and were eventually destroyed. R.A. Cordell, Somerset Maugham, Bloomington 1969, p.283.

¹¹⁵ Wiseman to Murray, 8 June 1918, Wiseman Mss. 91-85. Thwaites memorandum, 4 Nov. 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-106. Czech agents also appeared in novels, other than Ashenden, about the First World War. In A Prince of the Captivity, London 1933, Buchan, who was in a position to know, wrote: 'He is a Czech, and the Czechs having no fatherland at present, are the greatest secret agents in this war.' p.71.

In the first months of 1917, while the United States was still neutral, the arrangements established in 1916 for recruiting Yugoslavs in America for the Serbian army continued to function. In the United States the recruiting was done by South Slav and French agents who sent their recruits to Canada. The British government agreed to share the costs with the French government and were responsible for the recruits from the time they entered Canada until they reached the Serbian army. Because of the danger of alienating the American government, however, the British government absolutely refused to be involved in any manner whatever with the actual recruiting in the United States.¹¹⁶ After the American declaration of war British officials in the United States began to assume a more active role in Yugoslav recruiting. On September 5, 1917, Balfour, hoping that the American government would accept, if not participate in, the recruiting of Yugoslavs of both Austrian and American nationality, asked Spring Rice to bring the matter to the attention of the American authorities.¹¹⁷ Having difficulties organizing its own army, the government of the United States refused to participate in such recruiting but it agreed to allow recruiting of Yugoslavs not subject to service in the American army.¹¹⁸ On this basis the original arrangements continued but now with the open support of the British government.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately

¹¹⁶ F.O. to Fleurian, 11 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-2870-4989. Nicolson minute, 14 April 1917, F.O. 371-2870-80515.

¹¹⁷ Nicolson minute, 2 Sept. 1917, Cab. 24-25. Balfour to Spring Rice, 5 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2321.

¹¹⁸ Spring Rice to Balfour, 6 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2321. Balfour to Spring Rice, 19 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2322. Spring Rice to Balfour, 21 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2322. Spring Rice to Balfour, 26 Oct. 1917, F.O. 115-2322.

¹¹⁹ Balfour to Spring Rice, 14 Nov. 1917, F.O. 115-2322. Spring Rice to F.O., 20 Nov. 1917, F.O. 115-2322. F.O. to Spring Rice, 5 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3144-1245.

there are no reliable figures on the numbers recruited.

Yugoslav recruitment was not a peripheral issue because the continued existence of the Serbian army depended upon securing replacements. For that reason Balfour told Spring Rice: 'The matter is of considerable urgency and importance.'¹²⁰ Italy had the greatest potential for supplying replacements for the Serbian army because of the number of its Yugoslav prisoners of war, but Sonnino was reluctant to release them. Although he claimed that there was a danger of Austrian reprisals it is obvious that he had no desire to strengthen Italy's potential rival on the Adriatic.¹²¹ The placing of Yugoslavs in the Serbian army might be interpreted as acceptance of the idea that the South Slavs were one nation, and that was unacceptable to Sonnino. The war office considered the matter significant enough to be brought to the attention of the war cabinet and, after the original request for the release of Yugoslavs was rejected, Rodd was instructed to apply pressure on Sonnino.¹²² But such measures failed to move the Italian foreign minister whose obstinance considerably annoyed the British government. Cecil noted on one despatch: 'I wonder if the presence of Baron Sonnino at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is really an advantage.'¹²³ Both the British and French governments continued to pressure Sonnino to change his attitude but without success.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Balfour to Spring Rice, 5 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2321.

¹²¹ F.O. to Erskine, 29 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-2885-185876. Erskine to F.O., 3 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-2885-190147.

¹²² War cabinet 294, 7 Dec. 1917, Cab. 23-4. Rodd to F.O., 8 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-2885-233317. Rodd to Balfour, 24 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-2885-244599.

¹²³ Cecil minute, 29 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-2885-244599.

¹²⁴ F.O. to Rodd, 21 Feb. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-31933.

During 1916 the Czechs in England, who, because of the recommendation of the London Czech Committee, were not subject to internment were singled out by the war office for the distinction of being allowed to serve in the British army. The authorities did not directly recruit Czechs but worked through the London Czech Committee.¹²⁵ In fact the Czechs were given a choice between military service, national service or internment.¹²⁶ By the end of May 1917 at least 321 had been recruited from the Czech community in Britain, which numbered approximately 1000, and at least six who opposed military service were interned on the recommendation of the London Czech Committee.¹²⁷ In July 1917 the French government began to establish a separate Czech army for which it hoped to gain recruits from all the Allied countries.¹²⁸ Recruiting began by November 1917, and, as in the case of the Yugoslavs, French and Czech agents worked in the United States where they got an estimated 30,000 volunteers.¹²⁹ On December 16, 1917, the French government officially announced the creation of a Czechoslovak army under the political authority of the Czechoslovak National Committee but under the military command of the French army.¹³⁰ The British government eventually co-operated in the formation of this army by releasing

¹²⁵ Waller to Bigham, 26 Feb. 1917, Waller to Sykora, 13 Mar. 1917, Sykora to Waller, 11 April 1917, H.O. 45-10831-326555.

¹²⁶ Waller to Sykora, 9 May 1917, H.O. 45-10831-326555.

¹²⁷ Metropolitan police to H.O., 23 May 1917, Waller minute, 29 May 1917, H.O. 45-10831-326555.

¹²⁸ Western and General Report 24, 11 July 1917, Cab. 24-146.

¹²⁹ Beneš, Memoirs, pp.101, 182.

¹³⁰ D. Perman, The Shaping of the Czechoslovak State, Leiden 1962, p.33. J. Bradley, Allied Intervention in Russia, London 1968, p.66. C. MacKenzie, Dr. Beneš, London 1946, p.89. Beneš memorandum, 13 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-84727.

for service its Czech prisoners of war.¹³¹ The French also wanted the Italians to release their Czech prisoners for this army, but instead the Italian government followed the French example and established its own Czech army.¹³² In March 1918 the Italian government agreed to establish this army on the same terms as the army in France in that while under Italian military command it was subject to the political authority of the Czechoslovak National Committee.¹³³ While serving on different fronts the Czechoslovak military forces were recognized as one army with one political allegiance.

Early in the war the Russian government had formed Czech military units from the Czech communities in Russia. In 1916 these had been expanded by recruiting the Czechs who had deserted in large numbers from the Austro-Hungarian army.¹³⁴ After the revolution in March 1917 these forces had been expanded even further by the Provisional government until they reached the size of an army corps.¹³⁵ In July 1917 Masaryk travelled to Russia with the assistance of the British government to work on the organization and expansion of this army.¹³⁶ It has been claimed that he

¹³¹ War office, Statistics of the Military Effort of the British During the Great War, 1914-1920, London 1922, pp.634-635. One hundred Austro-Hungarian prisoners were released for military service but it is probable that not all of them were Czechoslovaks.

¹³² 'Western and General Report', 12 Sept. 1917, Cab. 24-146. Rodd to Balfour, 24 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-2885-244599.

¹³³ Rodd to Balfour, 10 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-49674. Spiers memorandum, 13 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-49226. Cubitt to F.O., 2 April 1918, F.O. 371-3149-58584. Spiers memorandum, 30 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-58590.

¹³⁴ Bradley, Intervention, p.65.

¹³⁵ R.H. Ullman, Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921: Intervention and the War, Princeton 1961, p.151.

¹³⁶ Steed to Buchanan, 12 May 1917, F.O. 395-109-97534. Hardinge to Hall, 15 May 1917, F.O. 371-3008-96719.

went at the request of the British government and as its paid agent, but this cannot be substantiated by documentary evidence.¹³⁷ There can be no doubt that the government would not have hesitated to use Masaryk in this fashion had its interests been at stake, but in July 1917 it showed no interest in the formation of Czech units in Russia. As president of the Czechoslovak National Committee Masaryk was able to establish his authority over the Czech army in Russia so that by the Spring of 1918 the committee possessed the allegiance of all Czechoslovak forces fighting for the Entente.¹³⁸

The British government was in no way involved with this Czechoslovak army until November 1917, when the French government suggested supporting it and other military units in Russia prepared to continue the war against the Central powers.¹³⁹ The collapse of the Russian army after the failure of the July offensive in Galicia exposed the right flank of the Rumanian army and relieved the enemy of pressure on the eastern front. The proposal to support a number of military units in Russia determined to continue the war was designed to organize these forces and so reconstruct an eastern front. The proposal appealed to the foreign office but Clerk warned:

As regards the Czechs, the risks they run if captured by the enemy are obvious, but if they are willing to incur them, we need not worry. But in return the Allied Govts. will be considered pledged to support Czech aspirations to the best of their power. Bohemia is the buckle of the Slavonic belt which we need to draw across Eastern Europe, but her liberation involves highly complex political and military problems, which cannot be lightly undertaken.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Bradley, Intervention, p.65.

¹³⁸ Seton-Watson, Masaryk, pp.100-101.

¹³⁹ Ullman, Anglo-Soviet, pp.40-57. Memorandum, 26 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-2895-216380.

¹⁴⁰ Clerk, Nicolson, Hardinge minutes, 4 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-2895-216380.

The declared intention of the Bolshevik government to make peace with the Central powers weakened the strategic position of the Allies even further, and intensified the need to organize whatever forces were available in eastern Europe to combat the enemy. On December 14, 1917, the war cabinet decided that:

Any sum of money required for the purpose of maintaining alive in South East Russia the resistance to the Central powers, considered necessary by the War Office in consultation with the Foreign Office should be furnished, the money to be paid in instalments so long as the recipients continued the struggle. ¹⁴¹

Arrangements to carry out this policy in conjunction with the French government were worked out at a conference in Paris on December 23, 1917, attended by Cecil, Milner and General G.M.W. Macdonogh, the director of military intelligence. ¹⁴² From this time the Czechoslovak army in Russia was financially supported by the French and British governments and according to one source, by June 1918 it had received £80,000 from the British representatives in Russia. ¹⁴³ By the end of March 1918 there were about 42,000 men in the first Czechoslovak corps and a second was being formed. ¹⁴⁴

Before 1917 the British government had used the émigrés primarily in espionage and propaganda. Although émigrés had been recruited in 1916, that policy was not fully developed until 1917 when military service became the major form of co-operation between the government and the

¹⁴¹ Abraham, 'Policy of the War Cabinet Relative to Revolutionary Governments at Petrograd', 23 Feb. 1918, Milner Mes. box B, cited in Ullman, Anglo-Soviet, p.52.

¹⁴² Ullman, Anglo-Soviet, pp.54-55.

¹⁴³ Graham to treasury, 26 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3283-14389. Wardrop to F.O., 18 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3323-50420. Bradley, Intervention, p.65.

¹⁴⁴ D.M.I. to F.O., 30 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3323-57780.

nationality organizations. This use of the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks was the direct outgrowth of the co-operation which had existed in the early years of the war. In most cases it was carried out by the same officials, both in the government and the nationality organizations, and was the logical extension of their earlier policies. Once the government had begun to use the nationalities in espionage and propaganda, it was natural and probably inevitable that it would use them to form military units.

The successful use of the nationalities depended upon the willingness of the émigrés to co-operate with the government. In fact the leaders of the nationality organizations not only volunteered their services, but also suggested many of the forms of co-operation which were later adopted. For example, the idea of creating Czechoslovak military units originated with the émigrés who had campaigned for such a policy long before it was adopted.¹⁴⁵ Once the Allied governments agreed to form such units their success depended almost entirely upon the émigrés who undertook the task of recruiting. In his memoirs Benes explained the émigrés' willingness to co-operate:

The Allies could desert us only if we ourselves were to desert beforehand. This meant a perpetual struggle, and the gradual establishment of our independence during the war by means of our own work and the sacrifice of our own blood.¹⁴⁶

The political influence of the émigrés increased because the more the Allies used them, the more dependent upon them they became. By the spring of 1918 the Czechoslovak National Committee had political control over three Czechoslovak armies. The possession of such military force

¹⁴⁵ Benes, Memoirs, p.182. Masaryk, State, p.65.

¹⁴⁶ Benes, Memoirs, p.189.

was one step on the road to statehood and it increased enormously the political influence of the Czechoslovak émigrés in Allied countries. Now the Czechoslovaks could, if they chose, make demands upon the Allied governments which could not be easily brushed aside. The Yugoslavs were not so fortunate since Yugoslav volunteers had always been sent to the Serbian army over which the émigrés had no control. There was no separate Yugoslav army and therefore no lever with which the Yugoslavs could pry concessions from the Allied governments.

The pursuit of a separate peace obviously did not cause the government to abandon the nationalities who were indeed used more than before. If a separate peace with Austria-Hungary proved impossible, the government could always intensify its use of the nationalities in political warfare against Austria-Hungary. The government's attitude towards the émigrés and their British supporters reflected the contribution of the nationalities to the war effort rather than the desire for a separate peace. During 1917 good relations existed between the officials and the émigrés, as one might expect in view of their co-operation, and the government did what it could to assist them. There were a number of incidents which reflected government support for the nationalities despite the fact that the government was seeking a separate peace. The foreign office, for example, facilitated the transfer of funds to Masaryk from the Bohemian Alliance and made the arrangements for his trip to Russia.¹⁴⁷ In February 1917 Supilo, who in October 1914 had been exempted from the restrictions which applied to enemy aliens, got into difficulty with the Special Branch of Scotland Yard.¹⁴⁸ Both the police and the home office wanted to treat

¹⁴⁷ Gaselee minute, 23 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-2862-12976. Hardinge to Hall, 15 May 1917, F.O. 371-3008-96719.

¹⁴⁸ Thomson to F.O., 8 Feb. 1917, F.O. 371-2863-38799.

him like any other enemy alien but were prevented from doing so by the foreign office.¹⁴⁹ In fact, Clerk and Nicolson, who were responsible for the intervention of the foreign office, were considerably annoyed by the police harassment of Supilo.¹⁵⁰ According to Clerk:

... Mr. Supilo is none the less a serious leader of the Jugo-Slavs and should be treated with all possible consideration, as not only is he heart and soul with the Allies, but he has more common sense and more idea of what is practical than any of the other members of the Jugo-Slav Committee. ¹⁵¹

The government also assumed a very lenient, if not protective, attitude towards Seton-Watson, despite his criticisms of the policy of the government and its allies.¹⁵² While not protecting itself from the attacks of Seton-Watson, it often protected him from the attacks of his many enemies. In March 1917 one of his severest critics was interned, apparently on his recommendation.¹⁵³ On March 30, 1917, Seton-Watson was called up for military service and it appeared as if his political and journalistic activities had come to an end. It is possible that the call-up was arranged by his political opponents, for on March 4, 1917, J. King, a member of parliament associated with the Union of Democratic Control, noted: 'Seton-Watson has now joined the R.A.M.C. - thanks to me. I hope this may curb his baneful activities.'¹⁵⁴ If this was an attempt

¹⁴⁹ Thomson to F.O., 27 Feb. 1917, H.O. to F.O., 9 Mar. 1917, Graham to H.O., 15 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-2863-52214. Clerk to Supilo, 9 April 1917, F.O. 371-2863-70830.

¹⁵⁰ Nicolson minute, 13 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-2863-52214.

¹⁵¹ Clerk minute, 14 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-2863-52214.

¹⁵² The New Europe, vol. IV, no. 47, 6 Sept. 1917.

¹⁵³ Müller minute, 23 Jan. 1917, Gaselee minute, 30 Jan. 1917, F.O. 395-139-14565.

¹⁵⁴ H.N. Fieldhouse, 'Noel Buxton and A.J.P. Taylor's The Trouble Maker's, in A Century of Conflict, 1850-1950, Essays for A.J.P. Taylor, M. Gilbert (ed.), London 1966, p.188.

to neutralize his influence, it failed because, according to the minutes of the war cabinet:

The War Cabinet had under consideration the case of Mr. Seton-Watson, the authority on Serbian affairs, who was serving as a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and whose services as an expert were required by the Information Department. The War Cabinet decided that - Private Seton-Watson should be attached for duty to the Information Department. 155

The government took no action against Seton-Watson's periodical The New Europe, even though it received complaints that some of the articles were anti-Italian.¹⁵⁶ It also adopted a similar attitude towards Yugoslav propaganda. When the director of special intelligence requested permission from the foreign office to prohibit the export of Yugoslav propaganda, the latter refused except in those cases where the propaganda included direct attacks on the Italian government, and reserved for itself the right to decide in all cases whether the offending pamphlet should be prohibited.¹⁵⁷ Within Britain, the Yugoslavs remained free to publish without restriction. The Russians or the Serbians usually assumed the responsibility of protecting Yugoslavs in neutral countries but since neither had representatives in Peru, the foreign office accorded unofficial protection for the Yugoslavs in that country.¹⁵⁸ These incidents are of little importance in themselves, but they do reflect the government's support, and possibly sense of responsibility, for the nationalities.

During 1917 the relations between the government and the nationality

¹⁵⁵ War cabinet 119, 16 April 1917, Cab. 23-2.

¹⁵⁶ Hutton to Montgomery, 31 May 1917, Nicolson minute, F.O.395-98-108461.

¹⁵⁷ Cockerill to Hardinge, 7 Feb. 1917, Hardinge to Cockerill, 13 Feb. 1917, F.O. 395-141-30311.

¹⁵⁸ Crowe to Rennie, 31 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-2870-166836.

organizations centred almost exclusively on their co-operation in espionage, propaganda and the formation of military units. There was little interchange of ideas between the officials and the émigrés. During 1915 and 1916 the émigrés had presented their political programmes to the foreign office and had won at least the limited support of a number of officials. But the period of proselytizing in official circles was past. There was little to be gained by the resubmission of the same programmes since the fate of the nationalities depended more on the success of their efforts to co-operate with the government and upon the course of the war. During 1917 the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs did not press their views on the government, did not try to prompt discussion in official circles of their political programmes and did not attempt to force the government to adopt a policy favouring national self-determination.

The Yugoslavs had the least contact with the government for reasons peculiar to their own movement. The connection that was weakened by Supilo's resignation from the Yugoslav Committee in June 1916 was severed by his death in September 1917.¹⁵⁹ Since the Yugoslav Committee subordinated itself to the Serbian government, the British government tended to deal with South Slav affairs through the latter. The subordinate relationship of the committee to the government, the reason for Supilo's resignation, was confirmed in June 1917 when Pašić and Trumbić signed the declaration of Corfu which announced their support for the union of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes under the Karageorgević dynasty.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Seton-Watson to Vesnić, 10 Jan. 1917, Seton-Watson Mss. VIII. Clerk minute, 29 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-2870-64572. See above, p. 119.

¹⁶⁰ Ostović, *Yugoslavia*, p. 83. Seton-Watson memorandum, 15 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-2889-180815. Seton-Watson memorandum, 6 July 1917, F.O. 371-3081-133073.

Had the nationalities seriously attempted to promote the discussion of national self-determination within official circles, they would have had little success. The attention of the government was obviously devoted almost entirely to a separate peace with which national self-determination was utterly irreconcilable. Even if the Allies achieved their maximum aims in a separate peace, the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs would gain nothing more than autonomy, a solution totally unacceptable to the émigrés who had staked everything on national self-determination. Indeed, they might even be entirely abandoned. Since national self-determination for the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks now seemed impossible there was little desire or inclination within the government to discuss it. Whenever the issue was brought up, it was only within the context of a separate peace and, therefore, on terms which were a negation of the principle itself.

In October 1917, following the recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee by the Italian and French governments, Beneš sought some act from the British government to reaffirm its support of the Czechoslovak cause. Approaches on his behalf were made to Balfour and, on October 25, 1917, he submitted a memorandum to the foreign office after discussions with Clerk on the subject of recognition.¹⁶¹ It is important to note the manner in which Beneš approached the government because the tactics of Beneš and Masaryk probably explain, to some extent, why the British officials tended to prefer the Czechs to the other émigrés. In his discussions with Clerk, Beneš began by stating that the Czechs were united and committed to the Entente. Their support was absolute not

¹⁶¹Hoare to Balfour, 1 Nov. 1917, Clerk minute, F.O. 371-2864-207239.

conditional. He then reminded Clerk of the Czech contribution to the struggle and requested that some encouragement be given to the Czechs in the form of a public statement alluding to their desire for independence.¹⁶² The significance of his approach is that, unlike the Polish émigrés, he neither made demands upon the government nor threatened it with loss of Czechoslovak support if it failed to act upon his suggestion. Clerk agreed that something should be done to encourage the Czechs and added: 'I believe that we are under a great obligation to Czech organizations in America, both for information, documents, and frustration of acts of violence and sabotage.' Balfour brought the issue to the attention of the cabinet on November 21, 1917, and stated:

As far as his personal sympathies were concerned, although he did not in any way wish to minimise the efforts of many of the Poles, he thought the Bohemians were deserving of the greatest consideration from the Allies. They had made great sacrifices for the Allies, but he feared that, owing to their geographical position, the ideal of independence appeared chimerical; the utmost that they could hope for being home rule within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹⁶³

But the Czechs received no public encouragement whatever, for the government did not even consider accepting a commitment to their cause; neither they nor the Yugoslavs were mentioned in the speech to the Trade Union Congress. The British government was under no compulsion to recognize the Czechoslovak National Committee since, unlike the French and Italian governments, it was not forming a separate Czechoslovak army in Britain. As long as the government was intent on a separate peace it would not create unnecessary obstacles to negotiations with Austria-Hungary and could, therefore, scarcely satisfy the émigrés. By pursuing

¹⁶² Clerk to Hardinge, 26 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-2864-207244.

¹⁶³ War cabinet 279, 21 Nov. 1917, Cab. 23-4.

a separate peace while using the nationalities as a weapon of war, the government was following a policy that was ultimately contradictory. But it was free to follow this policy without resolving the contradiction because the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks did not demand a commitment in exchange for their services. This situation could not, however, last indefinitely. As the 'émigrés' contribution to the war, and hence their power, increased, they would be in a better position to make demands and would almost inevitably do so.

The government's failure to give any public assurance to the Czechs was certainly not the result of any ill-will. Not everyone in the government was pro-Czech but, on the other hand, it is remarkable that no one in the government ever seems to have commented adversely about them. Statements like Cecil's 'The Poles always were a most unreliable people,' of which numerous examples can be found in the official documents, never appear to have been made in reference to the Czechs.¹⁶⁴ The undeniable popularity of the Czechs in British official circles probably resulted in part from the personal qualities of their leaders, particularly Masaryk, and in part from their services to the Entente. In any case, among the various nationalities, they made the greatest positive impression on British officials. Maugham's opinion of the Czechs, formed when he worked with them in Russia, may not have been typical but is worth quoting:

here I see a patriotism that fills me with amazement. It is a passion so single and so devouring that it leaves room for no others. I feel that awe rather than admiration is due to these men who have sacrificed everything for the cause, and not in twos or threes, fanatics among an apathetic herd, but in tens of thousands; they have given everything they had, their peace, their home, their fortune, their lives, to gain independence for their country. ¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Cecil minute, 19 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-49989.

¹⁶⁵ W.S. Maugham, A Writer's Notebook, London 1949, p.142.

The lack of comment on the fate of the nationalities in Lloyd George's speech to the Trade Union Congress caused a resurgence of Yugoslav activity. On January 9, 1918, Jovan Jovanović, the Serbian minister and a supporter of the Yugoslavs, asked Cecil if the speech meant that the Yugoslavs had been abandoned. Cecil, although not a supporter of national self-determination, replied that:

if we had a complete victory and were able to dictate any terms we pleased I should favour the establishment in some form or other of a Yugo-Slav state as also the granting of independence to the Czechs; though how far any such object would be obtainable depended on the future of the war. ¹⁶⁶

The Serbian government did not find such statements reassuring and continued to press for a British pronouncement on the future of Yugoslavia.¹⁶⁷ There was, of course, no possibility that the government would make any meaningful statement on the future of the Yugoslav cause as long as a separate peace with Austria-Hungary seemed possible. Even if the lack of action annoyed the South Slavs and weakened their war effort, the government would not create new obstacles to a separate peace.¹⁶⁸ In response to one request by Jovanović Hardinge commented: 'This sort of "démarche" is in reality "window dressing" for Servian consumption. The Minister must know that under present conditions such aims cannot be realized.'¹⁶⁹

It might appear during 1917 as if the government was following two separate and contradictory policies on the future of eastern Europe. If

¹⁶⁶ Cecil to Des Graz, 9 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-6573.

¹⁶⁷ Jovanović to Balfour, 26 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-16711. Jovanović to Balfour, 25 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-16712. Des Graz to F.O., 7 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3154-44197.

¹⁶⁸ Balfour to Page, 20 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3154-48660. Troubridge to Milner, 30 Mar. 1918, W.O. 32-5130.

¹⁶⁹ Hardinge minute, 26 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-167212.

the government's action is analysed on the assumption that it reflected the government's political aims in eastern Europe then that action becomes incomprehensible: the pursuit of a separate peace gives the impression that the government desired the maintenance of the Habsburg monarchy, while its support of the nationalities gives the impression that it favoured national self-determination. The apparent contradiction cannot be explained in terms of the structure of the government or the confusion that undoubtedly existed within it during the war because the actions giving the impression that there were two policies were carried out by the same departments and often by the same men. The assumption that government action in these affairs reflected its political aims must, therefore, be rejected. If, however, it is assumed that the government's action was based on immediate strategic calculations, then that action at once appears consistent and comprehensible. The pursuit of a separate peace and the government's relations with the nationalities were two aspects of a policy designed to derive the maximum strategic advantage from the political problems of eastern Europe, which were, in any case, of secondary importance to the British government.

In March 1918 the government was still prepared to accept either the survival of the Habsburg monarchy or national self-determination, as long as neither solution increased German power. But it was not committed to either solution and was not absolutely convinced that one was intrinsically better than the other. During 1917 it had pursued a separate peace in preference to, but not to the exclusion of, national self-determination because this course of action seemed to offer the maximum strategic advantage. But the government was still prepared to accept national self-

determination and, because it had maintained its relations with the nationalities, was still in a position to do so.

Chapter VI

The Recognition of the Polish National Committee, 1917

During 1917 the Poles were in a position entirely different from that of the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks. The declaration of the Central powers on November 5, 1916, of the creation of an independent kingdom of Poland internationalized the Polish problem by altering the territorial settlement of the Congress of Vienna. This act escalated the competition among the belligerents for Polish support and focused that competition, hitherto restricted to the Polish community in America, on Poland itself. The Russian government might still refuse to recognize that Poland was an international problem, but it could not overlook the military significance of this declaration.

Before November 1916 the British government considered the Polish problem primarily as an aspect of Anglo-American relations. The foreign office had avoided involvement in Polish affairs in Europe, but had sought the support and the assistance of the Polish-American community. Anglo-Polish relations, insofar as they existed, developed within the context of the political warfare in the United States but divorced from the Polish problem in Europe.¹ That problem remained frozen as long as the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian governments maintained the Polish settlement by treating it as an internal problem and avoiding any action which would constitute internationalization. The political warfare which made the

¹ See Chapter III.

Polish issue important in Anglo-American relations continued after 1916, but ceased to supply the context in which Anglo-Polish relations developed. The emergence of the Polish problem in Europe now supplied that context while the Polish aspects of Anglo-American relations became less important and relatively unimportant.

Changes in the nature of the Polish problem did not change the British approach to Polish affairs: it remained as it had been since 1914. Since the Polish nation was a weapon which could be used by either side, the primary concern of the British government was to maximize its military advantages from the Polish situation, while minimizing those of the Central powers. On one hand the Allies were under constant pressure, created by enemy initiatives, to undertake measures to counteract German attempts to win Polish support while, on the other, the worsening strategic situation forced the Allies to use every means available, including the nationalities, to increase their military strength. These two factors motivated almost every British action in Polish affairs during 1917. While the government used the Polish nation as a weapon of war, it remained determined to avoid embarrassing commitments on the future of Poland. Such commitments had always been avoided because of the attitude of the Russian government, and because, by limiting future alternatives, they were always inexpedient. During 1917 the natural desire to avoid commitments was reinforced by the Entente's loss of faith in its ability to win the war and by the possibility which now emerged of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. But in contrast to Czechoslovak and Yugoslav affairs, Polish affairs were not significantly influenced by the possibility of a separate peace until December 1917, when Poland ceased to be in any sense whatever a Russian problem.

British policy was determined by basic military considerations and

not by any desire for Polish independence. In fact almost no thought was given to independence, the form it might assume, or its potential significance for European relations. As that independence became more likely, the desire developed within the British government for a Poland consistent with British interests and therefore hostile to Germany. But this desire must not be mistaken for a desire for an independent Poland, for it could be satisfied by a number of alternatives not involving independence. Although personal preferences existed, the government remained uncommitted to any particular solution to the Polish problem and prepared to accept any of the alternatives as long as it did not involve an increase in German military potential. In fact, the government was prepared to accept whatever alternative produced the greatest immediate strategic advantage. The general policy of using the Poles as weapons of war was never clearly enunciated and did not entirely represent the views of those officials who were pro-Polish. But the following analysis of British action in Polish affairs shows clearly that the government supported action designed to thwart German policy in Poland, that it initiated and supported other attempts to gain military advantages from the Polish situation, that it consciously and assiduously avoided commitments on the future of Poland and that it was prepared to barter the future of Poland in exchange for immediate strategic advantages.

Before November 1916 the British government had ample warning that the Central powers were considering the establishment of an independent kingdom of Poland and the creation of a Polish army.² The attitude of the

² Drummond memorandum, 16 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-96. Howard to F.O., 16 Aug. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-161698. Grant Duff to de Bunsen, 7 Sept. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-177705. Howard to Hardinge, 2 Nov. 1916, Hardinge Mss.27. Rumbold to F.O., 4 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-222019.

Russian government made action to forestall this threat impossible but the foreign office could at least take comfort in the thought that it might finally force the Russians to assess the Polish situation realistically. According to Clerk: 'Any interference by us would be resented in Petrograd and might easily make things worse. The best hope is that the Austro-German offer, when made, will force even the reactionaries to see that Russia must make a counterbid'.³

In the latter half of 1916 developments in Russia caused a considerable degree of uneasiness within the foreign office and strengthened the resolve of the government to maintain its reserve on the Polish issue. The dismissal of Sazonov in July 1916 was attributed to his liberal attitude towards Poland.⁴ The appointment of Boris Stürmer, a reactionary hostile to Polish reform, as his successor justifiably reinforced the ever-present fear within the foreign office that Russia might agree to a separate peace with the Central powers rather than continue a war which might eventually result in the loss of Poland.⁵ Grey was particularly apprehensive and wrote on October 14, 1916: 'The Germans are no doubt holding up the proclamation of an autonomous buffer state of Poland because it would be fatal to separate peace with Russia'.⁶ When the Central powers finally acted, the foreign

³ Clerk minute, 16 Aug. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-161698.

⁴ Howard to F.O., 16 Aug. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-161698. Bertie diary, 17 Aug. 1916, F.O. 800-178. Buchanan to Hardinge, 18 Aug. 1916, Howard to Hardinge, 23 Aug. 1916, Hardinge to Buchanan, 26 Aug. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 24. Pares, 'A Memorandum on the Present Political Conditions in Russia', 16 Sept. 1916, Lloyd George Ms. E5-1-8.

⁵ Grey to Bertie, 24 Aug. 1916, F.O. 371-2804-170012. Fischer, Germany's Aims, pp.228-236.

⁶ Hardinge to Buchanan, 2 Sept. 1916, Hardinge Mss.25. Hardinge to Howard, 27 Oct. 1916, Grey minute, Howard to Hardinge, 14 Oct. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 26.

office, primarily concerned about a separate peace, reacted almost with relief, despite the military advantages the Central powers might gain from this proclamation. Seeing the proclamation as a tactical error Hardinge wrote to Bertie: 'I think that the fears held in high quarters of a separate peace between Russia and Germany are now greatly diminished,...'⁷

Following the proclamation of an independent kingdom of Poland, the Central powers began to work on the formation of a Polish army.⁸ Unless the Poles were to be totally abandoned to the Central powers the proclamation necessitated some response from the Entente. Although the initiative had to come from the Russian government, there was never any doubt that the British would co-operate.⁹ The military significance of enemy policy in Poland was clearly understood when Robertson reported to the cabinet that there were about 700,000 men in occupied Poland available for military service.¹⁰ Following a request by the Russian government on November 12, 1916, the foreign office issued a statement charging that the proclamation was a violation of international law.¹¹ From Paris Asquith, in concert with Briand, also issued a protest which included, at his insistence, a reference to the Grand Duke's promises of 1914.¹² This reference, which might have annoyed the Russians, was probably suggested by Clerk. He had accompanied

⁷ Hardinge to Bertie, 14 Nov. 1916, Hardinge to Howard, 16 Nov. 1916, Hardinge Mss. 27.

⁸ Fischer, Germany's Aims, p.245.

⁹ See above, pp. 128-129.

¹⁰ War committee, 7 Nov. 1916, Cab. 42-23-9.

¹¹ Hardinge to Grey, 12 Nov. 1916, F.O. to Buchanan, 13 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-227662. Buchanan to F.O., 15 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-230354. F.O., 'Official Communique', 10 Nov. 1916, F.O. 395-26-233257.

¹² The Times, 18 Nov. 1918. Bertie to Grey, 13 Nov. 1916, F.O. 800-178. Hankey, 'Note on Paris Conference', 15 Nov. 1916, Cab. 28-1-12. Hardinge to Grey, 18 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-233027.

Asquith to Paris and on November 6, 1916, had written: 'I believe that the German proclamation will be the best form of Allied propaganda, especially if followed, as it should be, by Russia renewing the assurances of the Grand Duke's Manifesto'.¹³ By protesting against the action of the Central powers the British government was acting according to Russian policy. Even though something more than a protest was obviously necessary if the Central powers were to be deprived of Polish support, the British government, passively hoping that the Russians would themselves respond to the challenge more decisively, and afraid of offending the Russian government, still refused to take the initiative in Polish affairs.¹⁴ The Russians were not unaware of the military significance of German policy and, like the British, realized that some positive action was necessary. The tsar's Order of the Day of December 25, 1916, stated that peace negotiations were impossible because Russian aims, such as the creation of a free Poland consisting of its three component parts, had not yet been achieved.¹⁵ On January 5, 1917, the tsar told Count Wielopolski, the leader of the Polish Realist party, that 'free' as used in his Order of the Day meant a Poland with a constitution, diet and army.¹⁶ It certainly appeared as if the Imperial government was moving in the direction, long desired by the British government, of an autonomous Poland.

Despite these measures the British government was losing patience with

¹³ Clerk minute, 6 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-225639. Clerk minute, 21 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-238962.

¹⁴ Clerk and Grey minutes, 21 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-238962. Howard to F.O., 1 Dec. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-243033. Rumbold to F.O., 16 Dec. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-256841. Buchanan to F.O., 24 Dec. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-260969.

¹⁵ Komarnicki, Rebirth, p.47. Halecki, Poland, p.468.

¹⁶ Buchanan to Hardinge, 19 Jan. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 29.

the Russian attitude towards Poland. When Mikhail Pokrovskii, the Russian foreign minister, was shown the text of the Entente's reply to President Wilson, which had been drafted at the Anglo-French conference in London, he protested that the reference to the tsar's Order of the Day tended to give the Polish issue an international character. Buchanan replied to Pokrovskii that: 'so far as Posen and Galicia were concerned that question could not be divested of its international character'¹⁷ He also wrote to Hardinge the next day: 'I think that we ought to tell the Russians quite plainly that that question has now assumed this character'.¹⁸ The foreign office, now directed by Balfour, who does not appear to have shared Grey's fear of Russia, was no longer prepared to accept objections of this type from the Russian government and, following Balfour's instructions, Buchanan continued in league with Maurice Paléologue, the French ambassador, to insist upon the original text of the note.¹⁹ In finally accepting the text, however, Pokrovskii warned the Allies that there were limits to what his government would accept: 'I must however make it quite clear that my Government expressly understands that elaboration of future status of Poland must be reserved exclusively to Russia and that question cannot form subject of International discussion.'²⁰

On January 18, 1917, despite this warning and unaware of Wielopolski's interview with the tsar, the cabinet instructed Milner, who was about to

¹⁷ Buchanan to F.O., 1 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3075-1290.

¹⁸ Buchanan to Hardinge, 2 Jan. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 29.

¹⁹ Balfour to Buchanan, 3 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3075-2031. Balfour to Buchanan, 6 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3075-4588. Buchanan to F.O., 5 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3075-5269.

²⁰ Buchanan to F.O., 8 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3075-6675. Pokrovskii to Buchanan, 8 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3000-16233.

embark for Russia:

to exercise his discretion as to the extent to which he might be able to urge upon the Russian authorities the importance of conciliating Polish opinion, from the point of view both of Germany's efforts to organize a Polish army, and of the influence of the large Polish element in the United States. ²¹

On January 14, 1917, the Central powers established a Polish Council of State and pressed forward their plans for a Polish army.²² The foreign office was kept informed of these events by Polish émigrés, who constantly warned that the dangers presented by enemy action in Poland could only be averted by the Entente's open and declared support for Polish independence.²³ The émigrés did not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity, presented by the action of the Central powers, to play one side off against the other. But the foreign office did not immediately respond to these warnings because the Russian government was already acting on the Polish question. Following the interview of January 5, 1917, the tsar set up a special commission under Wielopolski to work out plans for the future structure of Poland.²⁴ After discussions with Wielopolski and other Polish émigrés when he accompanied Milner to Russia, Clerk concluded that:

the first essential in any advance towards Polish unity and independence, [is] namely, that the initiative depends on, and must come from, the Russian Government. Unless Russia herself of her own volition, and without pressure from other Powers, offers all the Poles a measure of independence, such as that outlined in the Emperor's announcement to Wielopolski, Poland can never start fair on her progress to self-government. ²⁵

²¹ War cabinet 37, 18 Jan. 1917, Cab. 23-1.

²² Komarnicki, Rebirth, pp.115-116. Halecki, Poland, p.469.

²³ Howard to Hardinge, 18 Jan. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 29. Howard to F.O., 22 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-18454. Rumbold to F.O., 5 Feb. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-28868.

²⁴ Buchanan to Balfour, 5 Feb. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-47422. Lindley, 'Summary of Events', 5 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-2998-48291.

²⁵ Clerk to Milner, 1 Mar. 1917, Cab. 28-2. Lockhart to Buchanan, 13 Feb. 1917, Cab. 1-24-10.

Shortly after this re-affirmation of the policy of non-intervention in Polish affairs the entire situation changed because of the outbreak of revolution in Russia. Between November 1916 and March 1917 the British government had remained passive in Polish affairs while welcoming Russian attempts to win Polish support. The foreign office had hoped for Russian action on this problem since 1915.²⁶ For the future of Poland, the foreign office still preferred autonomy within the Russian empire, as set out by Balfour's war aims memorandum.²⁷ Even Drummond, who was particularly pro-Polish, admitted that a united Poland under the Russian crown would be the best solution since Polish independence as advocated in the Paget-Tyrrrell memorandum was, under existing circumstances, quite unattainable.²⁸ The Balfour solution would weaken Germany by making Poland, beyond any doubt, an internal Russian question. It would be an innovation in Russian internal affairs, but would not introduce a new factor into international relations. But the future structure of Poland and its potential role in international relations were not considerations, in any sense, for the British government. Its desire for Russian action on the Polish issue and its exasperation at the failure of the Russian government to act quickly and decisively to satisfy the Poles was based upon the fear, clearly shown in the cabinet's instructions to Milner, that the Central powers would win Polish support and use it against the Entente.

The establishment of a liberal government in Russia after the revolution gave the Entente the opportunity to act on the Polish issue. Possibly

²⁶ See above, pp. 128-130.

²⁷ See above, pp. 150-151. Clerk minute, 21 Nov. 1916, F.O. 371-2747-238962. Hardinge to Beaumont, 1 Feb. 1917, Hardinge Mas. 29.

²⁸ Drummond memorandum, 12 Feb. 1917, Cab. 24-6.

sensing the weakness of the Provisional government, the British government now acted on the warnings from Polish émigrés about the progress of the enemy's Polish policy.²⁹ On March 22, 1917, Dmowski submitted a memorandum to the foreign office in which he claimed that German efforts to create a Polish army had met with some success and that, freed from their oath of allegiance by the abdication of the tsar, the Poles might turn to the Central powers if the Provisional government continued to treat Poland as an internal problem.³⁰ While probably not swallowing Dmowski's nonsense about the oath of allegiance, Balfour forwarded this report to Buchanan with the comment that it was worth consideration.³¹ On March 25, 1917, in conversation with Paul Miliukov, the new Russian foreign minister, Buchanan tried to overcome Miliukov's misgivings about Polish independence by claiming that: 'Such a proposal would win over Poles at once to side of the Allies and would be received with enthusiasm in America'.³² In reporting this conversation to the foreign office, Buchanan asked permission to raise the question again and to point out to Miliukov the serious danger of the Poles turning to the Central powers. Clerk greeted Buchanan's suggestion enthusiastically, supported the idea of Polish independence, and stated that Russian fears as to the future policy of an independent Poland could be overcome by a military alliance between the two countries.³³ Hardinge fully realized the military necessity of some act to appease the Poles but was more hesitant than Clerk about independence because he shared Russian fears

²⁹ Barclay to Balfour, 19 Mar. 1917, F.O. 115-2317. Spring Rice to F.O., 18 Mar. 1917, F.O. 115-2317.

³⁰ Dmowski memorandum, 22 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-62097.

³¹ Balfour to Buchanan, 22 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-62097.

³² Buchanan to F.O., 25 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-63340.

³³ Clerk minute, 26 May 1917, F.O. 371-3000-63340.

that an independent Poland might be drawn into the German orbit. He suggested, therefore, that Russia be urged to go as far towards independence as possible while establishing guarantees as to future Polish policy.³⁴ On March 28, 1917, Balfour wrote to Buchanan:

I agree that in our treatment of the Polish question we must keep Russia with us. But it is very important that Russian Government should bear in mind certain aspects of that question which deeply affect the allies. (1) The Poles have it in their power to add enormously to Germany's strength by joining the German forces either as soldiers or as workmen.... (2) The re-creation of Poland in any satisfactory shape must affect Austria and Germany as well as Russia. In other words the Polish question is necessarily international and not merely Russian. Bearing these two points in mind would it not be desirable to sound the Russian Government as to policy of making some declaration about Polish freedom which would give reasonable satisfaction to the Poles and making this declaration not merely in the name of Russia but in fact of the Allies generally? ³⁵

Balfour was cautious enough to refer to Polish freedom, not independence. Although Buchanan's comments of March 25, 1917, may have influenced Miliukov's declaration on Poland of March 29, 1917, Balfour's telegram probably arrived after his decision.³⁶ Nevertheless the telegram was significant in showing that the British government was no longer prepared to treat Poland as an internal Russian problem, that it was primarily concerned about the military aspects of the problem and that, while hoping to avoid a breach with Russia, it was no longer prepared to leave the initiative entirely to the Russian government.³⁷

On March 29, 1917, Miliukov declared that the Russian government intended to create an independent Poland comprising those areas inhabited

³⁴ Hardinge minute, 26 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-63340.

³⁵ Balfour to Buchanan, 28 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-63340.

³⁶ Buchanan to F.O., 29 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-66637.

³⁷ Horodyski memorandum, 7 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3118-50659. Rumbold to Drummond, 28 Mar. 1917, Drummond to Rumbold, 28 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-66364. Drummond to Balfour, 28 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-76-63597.

by Poles, possessing its own constitution and army, and linked to Russia by a military alliance. He added the reservation, however, that this programme would be subject to revision by a future Russian constituent assembly.³⁸ This solution was called independence although it sounded more like autonomy. According to Drummond the declaration satisfied Balfour, whose original fear that an independent Poland would release Germany from Russian pressure was mollified by the proposed military alliance.³⁹ Once Dmowski and Horodyski had expressed their approval, the foreign office seemed satisfied with the declaration. Hardinge commented: 'On the whole, it gives the impression of a generous and statesmanlike measure'.⁴⁰ Since the Russian government had acted independently, the original suggestion for a joint declaration was abandoned.⁴¹ But the ever-present Polish émigrés informed the foreign office that unless the British government associated itself with the declaration, it would have no effect in Poland.⁴² On April 5, 1917, the foreign office instructed Buchanan to inform Miliukov that:

His Majesty's Government are happy to give their complete adherence to the principle of an independent and united Poland, which they recognize has now been rendered possible by the liberal and statesmanlike pronouncement of the Provisional Russian Government and Great Britain is ready to make every effort in unison with Russia to secure its attainment. ⁴³

³⁸ Buchanan to F.O., 29 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-66637.

³⁹ Drummond to House, 28 April 1917, F.O. 800-208.

⁴⁰ Clerk and Hardinge minute, 30 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-66637. Clerk minute, 31 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-66640. Rumbold to F.O., 1 April 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F59-9-2. Rumbold to F.O., 4 April 1917, F.O. 371-3000-70714.

⁴¹ Buchanan to F.O., 29 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-66640. Clerk minute, 31 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-67338.

⁴² Rumbold to F.O., 1 April 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F59-9-2. Clerk minute, 31 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-67338. Rumbold to Balfour, 4 April 1917, F.O. 371-3000-70417.

⁴³ F.O. to Buchanan, 5 April 1917, F.O. 371-3000-68947.

Had the original Russian declaration not been somewhat equivocal, and had this statement, drafted by Clerk, been without the phrase 'in unison with Russia', it might have committed the government to a great deal.⁴⁴ On April 26, 1917, Andrew Bonar Law, the chancellor of the exchequer, in reply to a question in the house of commons, welcomed the Russian proclamation with a statement that had been approved by the cabinet: 'Our efforts in the war will be directed towards helping Poland to realize her unity on the lines described in the Russian proclamation, that is to say, under conditions which will make her strong and independent'.⁴⁵ The original text of this statement had been suggested by Clerk after a conversation with Dmowski and was worded: 'The efforts of Great Britain in the war would be directed to helping Poland to realize her union and independence under conditions which would make her a strong and independent State ...'.⁴⁶ Following a request by Miliukov this text was modified and considerably weakened, so that the final statement delivered to the house of commons was far less committal than the one originally proposed by Clerk.⁴⁷ Nevertheless the government seemed committed to work with the Russians for the fulfillment of the promises to Poland.

Following the pattern established in 1916, the British government continued to prefer the conservative Poles of Wielopolski's Realist party and Dmowski's National Democratic party, with whom Horodyski, Alma-Tadema,

⁴⁴ Clerk minute, 3 April 1917, F.O. 371-3000-68947.

⁴⁵ War cabinet, 23 April 1917, Cab. 23-2. Bonar Law, 26 April 1917, F.O. 371-3000-86957.

⁴⁶ Clerk minute, 31 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-67338. Clerk to Cecil, 16 April 1917, F.O. 800-384.

⁴⁷ F.O. Buchanan, 18 April 1917, Buchanan to F.O., 19 April 1917, F.O. 800-205.

Smulski and Paderewski were associated, to the left wing represented by Zaleski and the Polish Information Committee.⁴⁸ This preference was clearly shown by most of the officials in contact with Poles, and in the government's daily handling of minor aspects of Polish affairs.⁴⁹ In those areas where Namier had influence there were exceptions, but these were insignificant and can be explained in part by the confusion and lack of co-ordination, resulting from overwork, which existed within the government and which gave Namier some freedom of action.⁵⁰ Since the foreign office refused to have any relations whatever with Polish émigrés in Britain not associated with Dmowski, most of its information on developments in Poland came from Polish conservatives, who were thus in an ideal position to influence the development of foreign policy. Dmowski and Ladislas Sobanski passed information directly to the foreign office, while two of Dmowski's lieutenants, Maurice Seyda and Erazm Piltz, channelled information through Rumbold.⁵¹ The one exceptional source of information was Esme Howard, the minister in Stockholm, who established contact with representatives of the Polish left-wing in German-occupied Poland.⁵² Information that German policy was achieving

⁴⁸ See above, pp. 129-138.

⁴⁹ D.S.I. to Hardinge, 9 Feb. 1917, F.O. 395-143-33158. Waller minute, 13 Mar. 1917, H.O. 45-10831-326555. Rumbold to Balfour, 16 Mar. 1917, F.O. 395-108-62108. F.O. to Litwinski, 23 Mar. 1917, Butler to Montgomery, 23 Mar. 1917, F.O. 800-210. Waller minute, 12 April 1917, H.O. 45-10836-330095. Alma-Tadema to Dmowski, 27 April 1917, F.O. 371-3012-88528.

⁵⁰ Rumbold to Balfour, 9 April 1917, Buchan to Davidson, 29 May 1917, F.O. 395-108-104074.

⁵¹ Rumbold to Balfour, 11 June 1917, F.O. 371-3001-119498. Rumbold to Balfour, 4 July 1917, F.O. 371-3003-138638. Halecki, Poland, p.51.

⁵² Howard to Hardinge, 10 May 1917, Hardinge Mss.32. Howard to Hardinge, 16 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-99577. Howard to F.O., 27 July 1917, F.O. 371-3001-149032. E. Howard, Theatre of Life: Life Seen from the Stalls, 1905-1936, London 1936, p.263.

some success in Poland and that action was necessary to prevent the Poles from supporting the enemy invariably came from Polish émigrés who stood to gain the most from Allied countermeasures. The fact that Dmowski's followers, who were widely dispersed throughout Allied and neutral countries, were permitted to communicate through the facilities of the British government is an indication of the strength of their position.⁵³ Among Dmowski's supporters Horodyski's influence on the British government was the greatest, greater even than Dmowski's. Because of his work for the government, he, more than any other Polish émigré, was trusted and respected by the foreign office.⁵⁴ As Polish fortunes improved Dmowski's aims increased. On March 26, 1917, following the abdication of the tsar, he informed the foreign office that Polish autonomy within Russia was no longer sufficient, and that he was now working for a large, independent Poland with access to the sea.⁵⁵

Dmowski's rise was accompanied by the eclipse of Namier, his most bitter antagonist in official circles, whose slight influence on the foreign office disappeared during 1917. As an employee of Wellington House Namier never had official access to the foreign office, but when Polish affairs were discussed his views were presented and defended by Percy.⁵⁶ Since Percy, as an expert on America, dealt with Polish affairs only when they were part of Anglo-American relations, his involvement declined when the

⁵³ Rumbold to Spring Rice, 29 April 1917, Drummond to Cecil, 20 May 1917, F.O. 115-2302.

⁵⁴ Drummond memorandum, 13 June 1918, F.O. 371-3282-106670. See above, pp. 77-78, 113-115, 133-136.

⁵⁵ Dmowski memorandum, 26 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-63741. Dmowski to Balfour, 1 April 1917, F.O. 371-3016-194676.

⁵⁶ See above, pp. 93-94, 130-139.

centre of attention in Polish affairs shifted to Europe. This development limited Namier's unofficial access to the foreign office and his reports for Wellington House, although circulated, appear to have had little influence.⁵⁷ In reference to the conflicts between Namier and Dmowski, Drummond wrote:

Of course I know about Namier, and Eustace Percy vouches for his absolute honesty. At the same time I regard him with considerable suspicion. I disagree with a great deal of what he writes ... his attack on Dmowski and other Poles is, in spite of what he says, purely personal and quite unjust.⁵⁸

In answer to similar charges Namier once wrote to Kerr:

You know me well enough to believe me that I am not actuated here by personal resentment against Dmowski and his whole Polish Black Hundred crew. After all from the very beginning it was not a personal question. I have never known any of their leaders personally and merely distrusted them as one disliked and distrusted their Russian reactionary confrères.⁵⁹

Despite his lack of influence in the foreign office, Namier did not lose all possibility of influencing foreign policy: his friendship with Kerr gave him at least potential access to the prime minister. When Wellington House was merged into the new department of information in February 1917 Namier began to write weekly reports on Polish affairs for

⁵⁷ Namier, 'Memorandum on Poland', 3 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-92381. Namier, 'Polish Conference at Stockholm', 15 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-99688. Namier, 'Crisis in Poland', 24 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-104735. Namier memorandum, 6 June 1917, F.O. 371-3001-107526.

⁵⁸ Drummond to Kerr, 6 April 1917, F.O. 800-384. The historian C.W.C. Oman, who was advising the foreign office on Polish affairs, wrote of Namier in one of his memoranda: 'I know Mr. Namier well, having examined him when he was an Oxford undergraduate, and seen him a good many times in later years. He is quite sincere, but very self-centred and disputatious: he used to consider himself as the only authority in England on the Ruthenian question, and to resent any one having independent views upon it.' Oman memorandum, 26 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-194676.

⁵⁹ Namier to Kerr, 2 April 1917, F.O. 800-384.

its intelligence bureau. Regardless of the foreign office, and much to its annoyance, these reports were circulated to the secretary of the war cabinet.⁶⁰ This practice gave Namier access to the centre of power and he remained at least a potential threat to Dmowski.

After the Russian proclamation, which momentarily satisfied the Polish émigrés, the foreign office was able to devote its attention to the military aspects of Polish affairs. In October 1916 Horodyski was sent to the United States as a paid agent of the British government to recruit American Poles for the Canadian army - a task at which he seemed to achieve some success.⁶¹ The records show that he received a payment of £2,000 in May 1917. Probably influenced by the example of the Central powers, Horodyski submitted a memorandum to the foreign office on March 7, 1917, in which he recommended the formation of a Polish army recruited in neutral countries, under British command and recognized as an ally.⁶² Although interested, the foreign office rejected the proposal as being too far-reaching in the existing circumstances.⁶³ But the formation of a liberal government in Russia on March 12, 1917, and the American declaration of war on April 6, 1917, removed the two major obstacles to the creation of such an army.

On April 22, 1917, Balfour embarked for the United States on a mission

⁶⁰ Intelligence bureau, 'Office Orders', 1 June 1917, F.O. 395-148-117714. Oliphant to Montgomery, 28 May 1917, F.O. 371-3010-105964.

⁶¹ Long to F.O., 15 Jan. 1917, Graham to W.O., 23 Jan. 1917, F.O. 371-3003-11832. Drummond memorandum, 16 Jan. 1917, F.O. 800-384. Derby to Cecil, 1 June 1917, F.O. 371-3003-106300. Drummond to Campbell, 17 May 1917, F.O. 115-2302. There is also a receipt for £2,300 for September 1917, F.O. 115-2322. In Dec. 1916 there were twenty-three American Poles enrolled in the University of Toronto Canadian Officers Training Corps. S.R. Pliska, 'The Polish American Army, 1917-1921', The Polish Review, vol. X, no. 3, 1965, p.50.

⁶² Horodyski memorandum, 7 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3118-50659.

⁶³ Drummond to Hardinge, 26 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3118-50659.

to establish closer relations in the conduct of the war.⁶⁴ In an interview with Balfour shortly after his arrival, Horodyski again raised the proposal for a Polish army and acquired Balfour's approval for submitting a memorandum on the subject to the American secretary of war.⁶⁵ It was now proposed, in the slightly altered plan set out in the memorandum, to establish a separate and distinctive unit within the American army of about 100,000 Poles recruited in America. To avoid confusion in American military planning, it was also suggested that this unit could be trained in Canada where adequate facilities were available.⁶⁶ On May 21, 1917, General G.T.M. Bridges, the military representative of the Balfour mission, explained the plan to House and urged its immediate acceptance.⁶⁷ On the following day Balfour, in an interview with Robert Lansing, the secretary of state, argued in favour of the proposal, for, as he wrote to the foreign office:

Quite apart from the fighting value of such an army its creation ought to have a very favourable effect upon the international situation in central Europe and it would greatly hamper if not entirely defeat any German attempts to get an important section of the Poles either to fight for them or to work for them.⁶⁸

During this interview Lansing informed Balfour that his government approved the plan in principle. But between that approval in principle and the commencement of recruiting, there were about three months of negotiations, in which the plan was fundamentally altered. The French

⁶⁴ Fowler, British-American Relations, pp.25-31.

⁶⁵ 'General Military Report', 11 June 1917, W.O. 32-5403.

⁶⁶ Memorandum, 9 May 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-105. Drummond to Cecil, 16 May 1917, Drummond to Cecil, 20 May 1917, F.O. 115-2302.

⁶⁷ Balfour mission report, 21 May 1917, W.O. 32-5403.

⁶⁸ Balfour to F.O. (draft), 23 May 1917, F.O. 115-2302. Bridges to Balfour, 23 May 1917, Cab. 1-25-5. Spring Rice to F.O., 24 May 1917, F.O. 371-3003-104267. Macdonogh to F.O., 26 May 1917, F.O. to Buchanan, 31 May 1917, F.O. 371-3003-106300.

government immediately complicated the situation by announcing on May 28, 1917, the formation of a Polish army in France.⁶⁹ This independent French action, which had not been preceded by consultation with the British government, was probably the result of simultaneous approaches to the Allied governments by Dmowski's subordinates. Horodyski caused further confusion with a proposal, entertained by the American government, for the creation of a Polish army, not as part of the American army, but as a separate legal entity in international affairs.⁷⁰ The foreign office disliked both developments because, while having no particular preference for the type of army created, it wanted immediate action before the military and political advantages evaporated.⁷¹ On June 21, 1917, Drummond telegraphed Horodyski: 'Present proposal that Polish army should become legal international affair ... seems to offer endless possibilities for delay and friction and I know that our people would much prefer original scheme'.⁷²

As the negotiations continued it became obvious that the French government wanted all available Polish recruits in the French-Polish army, that the Poles disliked the idea of exclusive French control, and that the American government was having second thoughts about the formation of a Polish army as part of the American army.⁷³ By August 1917, the British

⁶⁹ Langley to W.O., 4 June 1917, F.O. 371-3003-108187. Memorandum on French Polish army, 25 June 1917, W.O. 106-964.

⁷⁰ Horodyski to Drummond, 19 June 1917, F.O. 800-384. Horodyski to Drummond, 20 June 1917, F.O. 371-3082-123459.

⁷¹ F.O. to Buchanan, 31 May 1917, F.O. 371-3003-106300. Langley to Cambon, 16 June 1917, F.O. 371-3003-115713. Drummond to Balfour, 23 June 1917, F.O. 371-3003-123703.

⁷² Drummond to Horodyski, 21 June 1917, F.O. 371-3082-123459.

⁷³ Wiseman to Drummond, 29 June 1917, F.O. 371-3082-132447. Rumbold to F.O., 4 July 1917, F.O. 371-3003-132679. Wiseman to Drummond, 14 July 1917, Wiseman Mss.91-105. Spring Rice to F.O., 23 July 1917, F.O.115-2302. Drummond to Balfour, 7 Aug. 1917, F.O. 800-204. Paderewski to Horodyski, 28 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-169054.

government, probably following the path of least resistance in an attempt to settle the affair quickly, began to favour the French programme. The first steps in that direction came when the government arranged to ship Polish volunteers from Holland to France and to allow recruitment among the Poles interned in Britain for the French-Polish army.⁷⁴ By the end of the war 1,588 Polish civilians and prisoners of war had been released for service in this Polish army.⁷⁵ On August 28, 1917, Drummond, Clerk, Horodyski and Macdonogh met and worked out a compromise in which a Polish army financed by the Entente would be formed in the United States, trained in Canada and put under French command.⁷⁶ This plan was slightly modified after Spring Rice informed the foreign office that while the American government would permit recruiting in the United States for the Polish army, it would not assist in its creation because of the confusion this would cause in American military planning.⁷⁷ In October 1917, after arrangements had been made with the Canadian authorities, recruiting for the Polish army began with the sanction of the American government.⁷⁸ By

⁷⁴ Graham to H.O., 24 July 1917, H.O. to F.O., 8 Aug. 1917, H.O. 45-10740-262173. Langley to Bertie, 6 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3012-152470. Graham to Henderson, 16 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3003-155737.

⁷⁵ War Office, Statistics, pp.634-635.

⁷⁶ F.O. to D.M.I., 25 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3003-163638. Clerk minute, 27 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3003-166721. Drummond to Cecil, 29 Aug. 1917, F.O. 800-197. Drummond to Macdonogh, 30 Aug. 1917, F.O. 800-384.

⁷⁷ Spring Rice to Balfour, 6 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2321. Spring Rice to F.O., 15 Sept. 1917, Spring Rice to Devonshire, 15 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2302.

⁷⁸ Spring Rice to F.O., 27 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3003-187302. Spring Rice to F.O., 7 Oct. 1917, Devonshire to Spring Rice, 3 Oct. 1917, Spring Rice to Devonshire, 26 Sept. 1917, F.O. 115-2302. Balfour to Spring Rice, 27 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-188061. Waller to O'Leary, 22 Sept. 1917, H.O. 45-10836-550095.

February 1918 there were about 6,000 Polish recruits in Canada awaiting transport to France.⁷⁹ This recruiting was organized by Paderewski, Horodyski, Smulski and other Polish leaders in co-operation with the French authorities in the United States.⁸⁰ It was to be of the greatest political significance that the Poles involved were all followers of Dmowski.

The extent to which the British government was motivated to support the Polish army by pure military considerations should not be underestimated. The advantage of the army was that it allowed access to hitherto untapped sources of manpower such as Polish prisoners of war, enemy alien Poles and Poles in the United States not subject to conscription. While interested in the political advantages, such as the effect it would have on German attempts to create a Polish army, the British government was not prepared to release Poles already enlisted in the British and Canadian armies.⁸¹ In terms of Anglo-Russian relations, it is also significant that the Russian government was informed but not seriously consulted about the creation of this army. At one point the Russian government was asked to supply experienced Polish officers, but after this request was refused it was not consulted again.⁸² The Polish army as it finally emerged was recruited by the Poles, trained by the

⁷⁹ Martin to Gwatkin, 7 Jan. 1918, Martin to Gwatkin, 10 Feb. 1918, F.O. 115-2430. S.R. Pliska, 'The Polish American Army, 1917-1921', The Polish Review, vol. X, no. 3, 1965, p.53.

⁸⁰ Spring Rice to Devonshire, 10 Oct. 1917, F.O. 115-2302.

⁸¹ Langley to Cambon, 16 June 1917, F.O. 371-3003-115713. Gregory minute, Kozicki to Gregory, 24 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3096-185969.

⁸² F.O. to Buchanan, 31 May 1917, F.O. 371-3003-106300. Buchanan to F.O., 28 June 1917, Cab. 24-143.

Canadians, transported by the British and commanded by the French.⁸³ These arrangements tended to give France the most important role and created the impression that the Polish army was exclusively a French affair. Although Wiseman objected to the prominence this gave the French in Polish affairs, the foreign office was completely satisfied to allow France to appear to play the leading role.⁸⁴ The British government was not solely responsible for the creation of the army, but it played a key and far more decisive role than has been indicated in any previous account. Its involvement can be traced back directly to the decision to send Horodyski to the United States in October 1916.

The development of this Polish army, associated exclusively with the National Democrats, had important consequences for subsequent relations between the British government and Polish émigrés. Possessing the political allegiance of this army, the National Democrats' position in Allied countries vis-à-vis their political opponents was enormously strengthened because they could now approach the Allied governments, not as supplicants, but as men of authority. Early in these negotiations it became evident that the creation of an army almost necessitated the creation of some complementary political organization. Proposals for the recognition of a Polish committee arose from the negotiations, and, as in the case of the army, could be justified by political as well as military considerations. The long and difficult process which led to the recognition of the Polish National Committee began,

⁸³ Spring Rice to Drummond, 5 Oct. 1917, F.O. 115-2302. Spring Rice to F.O., 7 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-193261. Graham to C.O., 23 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3003-218483. F.O. to Spring Rice, 22 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3003-241326.

⁸⁴ Wiseman to Drummond, 24 Sept. 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-105. F.O. to Wiseman, 4 Oct. 1917, F.O. 800-204.

however, on April 30, 1917, when Dmowski suggested to Clerk that Polish committees be formed in Allied countries to carry out consular functions. He argued that this step was necessary because, since the Russian declaration of Polish independence, the Russian officials were beginning to treat all Poles as foreigners.⁸⁵ The foreign office referred the proposal to the home office, where it disappeared for two months.⁸⁶

On June 15, 1917, while the home office was pondering the question, Spring Rice informed the foreign office that the American government was considering the establishment of a Polish provisional government, an act of far greater political significance than the recognition of consular committees.⁸⁷ The foreign office disliked the idea, for reasons which were not yet evident, but seemed hesitant to oppose it.⁸⁸ On July 8, 1917, Clerk revived Dmowski's original proposal, possibly in an attempt to forestall the creation of a provisional government, by suggesting that the Allies be consulted on the recognition of consular committees. He argued that the recognition of a Polish committee would have beneficial political repercussions in Poland but added, possibly in reference to the proposal for a provisional government: 'It is not necessary as yet to go further than to create Polish Committees in the various Allied countries which should, ... be allowed to protect, and vouch for, individual Poles in those countries, whatever their technical nationality'.⁸⁹ The foreign office accepted

⁸⁵ Dmowski to Clerk, 30 April 1917, F.O. 371-3012-88528.

⁸⁶ H.O. to F.O., 5 July 1917, H.O. 45-10740-262173.

⁸⁷ Spring Rice to F.O., 15 June 1917, F.O. 371-3001-119346. Barclay to Balfour, 28 June 1917, F.O. 115-2302. Komarnicki, Rebirth, p.170. Horodyski to Drummond, 19 June 1917, F.O. 800-384.

⁸⁸ Drummond to Horodyski, 21 June 1917, F.O. 371-3082-123459. Drummond to Balfour, 23 June 1917, F.O. 371-3003-123703.

⁸⁹ Clerk minute, 8 July 1917, F.O. 371-3012-133576.

Clerk's proposal and on July 21, 1917, instructed its representatives to consult the respective Allied governments to which they were accredited on the recognition of committees charged with consular responsibilities. Following the text of Clerk's original proposal, the communication stated:

From such information as His Majesty's Government possess of recent events in Poland it is clear that the situation in that country has been the cause of serious preoccupation to the Central Powers, and it seems to His Majesty's Government that the Poles should be stiffened in their demands for liberty and independence and encouraged by all possible means to refuse all promise from our enemies of a mock independence, ... His Majesty's Government would therefore propose that the Allied Governments should henceforth openly recognize as friends and potential allies all Poles in their respective countries, ... This would not only be an earnest to the Poles themselves that the Allies supported their claim to an independent Polish State but it would also tend to bring home to public opinion in Allied countries the conception of a separate and independent Polish State and nation. These ends would be greatly furthered if there were set up in each country a representative Polish Committee, which, if approved by the Government, might be treated as the main channel of communication with Polish patriots. ⁹⁰

With the exception of the Russian government, which feared that the Polish situation was getting out of control, the Allies responded favourably to the British proposal.⁹¹ At the suggestion of the French government, however, further action was postponed, pending the results of a conference of Polish conservatives in Lausanne. In August 1917 representatives of the National Democratic and Realist parties met in Lausanne, and created the Polish National Committee, under the presidency of Dmowski.⁹² They

⁹⁰ F.O. to Buchanan, Rodd, Bertie, Spring Rice, 21 July 1917, F.O. 371-3012-133576.

⁹¹ Spring Rice to F.O., 23 July 1917, F.O. 115-2302. Buchanan to F.O., 24 July 1917, F.O. 371-3001-146480. Bertie to F.O., 1 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-151514.

⁹² F.O. to consul general in San Francisco, 21 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-164526. F.O. to Spring Rice, 22 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-163770. 'Message to Poland Sent as the Result of the Conference held by Polish Leaders at Lausanne', 12 Aug. 1917, F.O. 800-384. Mackray, Poland, p.82.

undoubtedly anticipated Allied recognition of some committee and were confident that it would be their organization.⁹³ Although Dmowski later made the ridiculous claim that the committee represented ninety percent of Polish opinion, it was in fact entirely conservative and largely National Democratic.⁹⁴ Other than Dmowski, its more prominent members were Paderewski, Seyda, Piltz and Sobanski.

Dmowski's supporters could be optimistic about recognition because the foreign office never seriously considered recognizing any other Polish organization. The conservatives were the only Poles with whom the government conducted any relations, and Allied attempts to create a Polish army depended upon their support. There was, however, a possible drawback to giving the conservatives official recognition. Despite Dmowski's extravagant claims, the foreign office suspected that he represented only a minority of Poles.⁹⁵ The suspicion was unsubstantiated but, if it was accurate, there might be little political advantage in recognizing the Polish National Committee. One of the original aims of recognizing a committee had been to thwart German attempts to win support in occupied Poland, but this aim might be jeopardized by recognizing a committee which did not represent Polish opinion. The alternative to the Polish National Committee seemed, however, even more unacceptable.

On January 14, 1917, as part of their plan to establish a Polish army, the Central powers created the Council of State as an advisory body on government in Poland. The Polish left-wing, never averse to limited

⁹³ Horodyski to Paderewski, 21 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-164526.

⁹⁴ Cecil memorandum, 3 Sept. 1917, F.O. 800-205.

⁹⁵ Namier memorandum, 3 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-92381.

co-operation with the Central powers, supported the council and participated in it.⁹⁶ Zaleski and Aleksander Lednicki, the leaders of the Polish left-wing in England and Russia respectively, recognized the Council of State as the nucleus of the future government of Poland, adhered to its pronouncements on policy, and sought recognition for it from the Allied governments.⁹⁷ In the European conflict the Council of State claimed to follow a policy of neutrality, but was obviously willing, and had little choice but, to undertake limited co-operation with the Central powers. Within Poland itself the council agreed to the formation of a Polish army to be used exclusively against Russia but only if it was created under a Polish government.⁹⁸ In an attempt to enforce a policy of neutrality on those Poles beyond its reach, the Council of State opposed active Polish participation in the war against the Central powers, and the formation of Polish armies outside of Poland.⁹⁹ Although it was always impossible to verify the claims of Polish politicians, the Council of State could claim, as convincingly as the Polish National Committee, to represent the majority of Poles. The Allies could, therefore, recognize either the Polish National Committee or a committee associated with the Council of State. The political advantages of recognizing the former were debatable, since it might not represent Polish opinion, but at least it represented those Poles who, having clearly shown their commitment

⁹⁶ Pidhaini, Ukrainian - Polish Problem, p.31.

⁹⁷ Zaleski memorandum, 16 July 1917, F.O. 371-3012-141126. Howard to Hardinge, 16 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-99577.

⁹⁸ Komarnicki, Rebirth, pp.116-117.

⁹⁹ Namier memorandum, 3 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-92381. Namier 'Crisis in Poland', 24 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-104735. Fischer, Germany's Aims, p.453. Kozicki memorandum, 31 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-108369. Namier memorandum, 4 June 1917, Cab. 24-15. Howard to Hardinge, 10 May 1917, Hardinge Mss. 32.

to the Entente by supporting the creation of a Polish army, were trusted by the Allies. A committee associated with the Council of State might represent Polish opinion, but it would not be committed to the Entente and could be suspected of being pro-German or pro-Austrian. Its recognition might hamper German attempts to exploit the Council of State, but it would mean abandoning plans for a Polish army.

When Zaleski sought Allied recognition for the Council of State, in July 1917, Clerk admitted that that organization might have the support of the majority of the Poles, but attributed this to the conditions of war which made it difficult for the National Democrats to remain in contact with the people of Poland.¹⁰⁰ He argued that, as an instrument of the Central powers, the Council of State could not be recognized by the Entente, and proposed:

that His Majesty's Government should whole-heartedly support the policy of M. Dmowski and his helpers, and should recognize them as the people to whom ... the destinies of Poland are entrusted until a reconstituted, free and independent Polish nation has the opportunity of deciding its own fate.¹⁰¹

Hardinge agreed with Clerk, and Drummond wrote: '... I think we ought to be very careful of accepting any views expressed by M. Zaleski on the war. The Council of State is after all a purely Austro-German institution.'¹⁰² The foreign office also reacted unfavourably when it learned that Zaleski was planning to give a public lecture at King's College.¹⁰³ On this subject Drummond wrote to Kerr: 'We do not think that the people who are getting up this meeting should be encouraged. I am rather doubtful as to their

¹⁰⁰ Zaleski memorandum, 16 July 1917, F.O. 371-3012-141126.

¹⁰¹ Clerk minute, 18 July 1917, F.O. 371-3012-133576.

¹⁰² Hardinge minute, 4 July 1917, Drummond minute, 4 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-147721.

¹⁰³ Nicolson, Clerk and Drummond minutes, 8 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3015-162614.

pro-Ally sentiments.¹⁰⁴ Instead of sanctioning the meeting, the foreign office asked the director of military intelligence to investigate Zaleski's activities.¹⁰⁵ In October 1917 Macdonogh sent the foreign office the results of this investigation, along with a recommendation for legal action against the Polish Review published by Zaleski.¹⁰⁶ The investigation presented no positive evidence that Zaleski was pro-German, despite the numerous accusations levelled against him by the National Democrats. But, accepting these accusations, the investigators remained convinced that Zaleski was pro-German because they did have evidence that he was in contact with other Poles suspected of being pro-German or pro-Austrian. One report ended with the statement: 'Meanwhile we are continuing the check on Zaleski's correspondence in the hope that it may yield useful results'.¹⁰⁷ Military intelligence failed to realize that almost all of the Polish émigrés, including Dmowski, were in contact with, or even in some cases related to, pro-Austrian Poles. Obviously influenced by the accusations of Horodyski and Alma-Tadema, military intelligence acted on the incredibly stupid assumption that anyone opposed to Dmowski was pro-German, an assumption which led them to make the preposterous accusation that Seton-Watson was publishing pro-German articles in The New Europe.¹⁰⁸ One of the reports ended with the recommendation that Zaleski be removed from politics by deportation or conscription. The foreign office accepted the views advanced

¹⁰⁴ Kerr to Balfour, 17 Aug. 1917, Drummond to Kerr, 20 Aug. 1917, F.O.800-199.

¹⁰⁵ Drummond minute, 9 Aug. 1917, Kerr to Nicolson, 17 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3015-162614. Nicolson minute, 1 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3015-170851.

¹⁰⁶ Macdonogh to F.O., 10 Oct. 1917, Bray, 'Report on August Zaleski', 20 Sept. 1917, M.I. 7d memorandum, 14 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-195993.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

by military intelligence, but after momentarily considering conscripting Zaleski into the British army, rejected the idea because such action might make him a martyr.¹⁰⁹ With Balfour's approval, however, legal measures were initiated to suppress the Polish Review.¹¹⁰ There was obviously never any question of giving official recognition to Zaleski or anyone associated with him.

In contrast, Lednicki in Russia was far more successful. When, as a result of the revolution, Wielopolski and Dmowski lost their influence in Russian official circles, they were replaced by Lednicki and his Polish Democratic Club, whose views were in far greater harmony with those of the Provisional government.¹¹¹ Shortly after the revolution, the government appointed Lednicki chairman of the Liquidation Committee charged with formulating plans for the separation of Poland and Russia.¹¹² When Dmowski's supporters in Russia began to agitate for the creation of Polish military units within the disintegrating Russian army, the Provisional government rejected the idea because of the danger that such troops might be used for counter-revolution.¹¹³ Following the policy of the Council of State, Lednicki supported the government in its opposition to Polish military units.¹¹⁴ The divergence between the Russian government and its allies on

¹⁰⁹ Nicolson minute, Clerk minute, 12 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-195993. Montgomery to Donald, 13 Oct. 1917, F.O. 395-108-197963.

¹¹⁰ F.O. to Macdonogh, 17 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-195993.

¹¹¹ Howard to Hardinge, 4 Sept. 1917, Hardinge Mss.34. Namier memorandum, 4 Sept. 1917, Cab.24-25. Halecki, Poland, p.468. Mackray, Poland, p.48.

¹¹² Namier memorandum, 3 May 1917, F.O.371-3001-92381. Mackray, Poland, p.51.

¹¹³ Blair to Macdonogh, 18 June 1917, Cab. 24-17. Buchanan to F.O., 28 June 1917, Cab. 24-143. Dmowski to Clerk, 14 May 1917, F.O. 371-3003-98006. Lindley, 'Fortnightly Summary of Events', 28 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-2997-176585.

¹¹⁴ Namier memorandum, 4 June 1917, Cab. 24-15. Kozicki memorandum, 31 May 1917, F.O. 371-3001-108369. Howard to F.O., 11 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-177555.

the Polish issue was obviously growing and it was unlikely that the Russian government would look with favour on Allied recognition of a Polish committee dominated by conservatives who had previously supported Russian autocracy.¹¹⁵

The foreign office considered Lednicki no better than Zaleski.

Although Howard, the only British official in contact with the Polish left-wing, sent the foreign office favourable reports about Lednicki, these had no effect upon its attitude and his recommendations were never accepted.¹¹⁶

When he stated in one report that recognition of the Polish National Committee would cause dissension among the Poles, Clerk wrote in reference to the Council of State: 'But their whole attitude ... has been one of compromise and making terms with the occupying Power and neither the Regency nor the cause of Poland would be safe in their hands'. He went on to attack the council's policy, adhered to by Lednicki, against the formation of Polish armies, and concluded: 'I entirely agree with Sir Esme Howard that it is undesirable to sow dissension among the various Polish parties, but I submit that to support those whose policy helps our enemies is even worse, ...'¹¹⁷ Subsequent events showed that Clerk expressed the view of the foreign office.¹¹⁸ It is obvious that Zaleski and Lednicki were never considered an alternative to the Polish National Committee. That committee might not have the support of the majority of the Poles, its recognition might not produce all of the anticipated political

¹¹⁵ Buchanan to F.O., 1 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-189230. Buchanan to F.O., 24 July 1917, F.O. 371-3001-146480.

¹¹⁶ Howard to Hardinge, 8 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-175905. Howard to Hardinge, 4 Sept. 1917, Hardinge Mss.34. Howard to F.O., 10 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-175906. Howard to F.O., 11 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-177555.

¹¹⁷ Howard to F.O., 8 Sept. 1917, Clerk minute, 10 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-175906.

¹¹⁸ F.O. to Howard, 14 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-175906.

advantages but, especially if the Allies wanted a Polish army, there was no alternative.

When the Polish National Committee, on August 28, 1917, officially informed the British government of its creation, the foreign office immediately wanted to recommend its recognition to the Allies.¹¹⁹ It hesitated, however, because the American ambassador, Walter Hines Page, had again raised the proposal for a Polish provisional government. On this occasion the opposition of the foreign office to the idea of a provisional government was clearly explained by Cecil in the description of his conversation with Page:

I said that it seemed to me a very difficult thing to create a Provisional Government of Poles in the United States without consulting the people of Poland, and I took the opportunity of pointing out that any such Government would necessarily define what it conceived to be the future limits of Poland and that these would include, among other things, the port of Dantzig. If we recognized a Provisional Government claiming the port of Dantzig, we should be more or less bound to struggle for the inclusion of Dantzig in the future Poland, and that, I thought, would be a great burden on the Allies. I therefore thought the proposal, in itself, of doubtful advisability.¹²⁰

Instead of a provisional government the foreign office still preferred the politically less significant recognition of the Polish National Committee. The original proposal for a committee charged only with consular functions was now, however, altered to include representation of Polish interests in Allied countries and responsibility for political issues arising from the Polish army.¹²¹ The fact that, on this basis, the committee would carry out many of the functions of a provisional government

¹¹⁹ Polish National Committee to Balfour, 28 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-169539.

¹²⁰ F.O. to Spring Rice (cancelled), 29 Aug. 1917, Cecil to Page, 30 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-170618.

¹²¹ F.O. to Spring Rice, 2 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-169539.

without being recognised as such probably explains why Page now withdrew his proposal.¹²² The problem of possible Russian opposition to recognition of the Polish National Committee was solved simply by not consulting the Russian government.¹²³ After some delay from negotiations over the actual formula of recognition, the French government recognized the Polish National Committee on September 20, 1917, and the British government followed suit, in terms similar to those used by the French, on October 15, 1917.¹²⁴ The American government, alone among the Allies intent upon consulting the Russian government, delayed its recognition until November 10, 1917.¹²⁵ By that time the Provisional government, opposed to the Polish National Committee until the end, no longer existed.¹²⁶

In view of the opposition of the foreign office to the proposal for a Polish provisional government, it is necessary to examine closely the terms on which it recognized the Polish National Committee, and the interpretation it placed on the act of recognition. The actual letter of recognition to Sobanski, the representative of the Polish National Committee in London, stated: 'I am to inform you ... that His Majesty's Government are very willing to recognize this official Polish organization and that

¹²² Cecil to Spring Rice, 3 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-173380. Spring Rice to F.O., 8 Oct. 1917, F.O. 115-2302.

¹²³ Buchanan to F.O., 1 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-189230.

¹²⁴ Gregory minute, 28 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-195992. F.O. to Wiseman, 1 Oct. 1917, F.O. 800-204. Bertie to F.O., 10 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-194981. Graham to Sobanski, 15 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-193915.

¹²⁵ Spring Rice to F.O., 15 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-198261. Spring Rice to F.O., 25 Oct. 1917, F.O. 115-2302. Drummond to Balfour, 13 Oct. 1917, Balfour to Spring Rice, 13 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-193915.

¹²⁶ Buchanan to F.O., 18 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-201591. Terestchenko to Buchanan, 24 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-209774. Buchanan to F.O., 25 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3011-207190. Buchanan to Balfour, 1 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3012-218506.

they note that the headquarters of the Committee are in Paris'.¹²⁷ Clerk later explained this rather vague statement:

as regards recognition, this has, for practical purposes, been accorded to a Committee of Poles working in the Western Capitals of Europe, but neither gives that Committee the status of representing all Poland nor excludes recognition of other equally pro-Ally organizations. ¹²⁸

In other words the committee had been recognized as nothing more than an official Polish organization. In practice the government, showing no inclination to recognize any other Polish organization, treated it as the only official Polish committee. Nevertheless, it had minimized its commitment to the Polish National Committee and had retained the option of recognizing other Polish organizations in the future.¹²⁹ In addition the foreign office did not consider that recognition implied any commitment on the future of Poland. When Cecil expressed his apprehension about recognition Drummond replied: 'I agree with Lord R. Cecil as to the inadvisability of making the reconstruction of Poland ... an allied war aim on the same plane as Belgium or Servia, but I do not see that the recognition of the Polish National Committee commits us to this in any way'.¹³⁰

Great significance might be read into the act of recognition by others, particularly Poles, but it is obvious that the foreign office did not agree. This conclusion is borne out by the arrangements which followed

¹²⁷ Graham to Sobanski, 15 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-193915. Mackray, Poland, p.84.

¹²⁸ Clerk minute, 8 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-193261. Clerk minute, 7 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-209774.

¹²⁹ Balfour to Weardale, 22 Nov. 1917, F.O. 800-210.

¹³⁰ Cecil minute, 9 Oct. 1917, Drummond minute, 13 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-193872.

the recognition of the committee and which indicate the degree to which the government was prepared to allow the committee to act as a provisional government. On January 8, 1918, at a conference attended by Clerk, Sobanski, Stanislas Kozicki and representatives of the war office and home office, arrangements were made to give the Polish National Committee consular privileges.¹³¹ The foreign office had already rejected a politically more significant proposal put forward by Gregory to give the committee full diplomatic privileges.¹³² As a result of this conference the government agreed to recognize Poles, regardless of their origin, as alien friends if they possessed a certificate issued by the committee. These certificates could be used as passports but, in return, the holders were obliged to volunteer for national service.¹³³ Sobanski wanted the certificates to state that the holder was of Polish nationality, but this was rejected by the officials who preferred that the certificates state simply that the bearer was a Pole.¹³⁴ At the conference Clerk explained to Sobanski that until an independent sovereign Poland existed it was impossible to recognize Polish nationality.¹³⁵ Sobanski was obviously trying to derive the maximum political advantage from these arrangements, but the government, while prepared to grant convenient privileges to the committee, was equally

¹³¹ Balfour to Sobanski, 22 Feb. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-33950. Moylan memorandum, 8 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-7341. Rumbold to F.O., 20 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-221738. Sobanski to Gregory, 22 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3012-224146. Kell to Clerk, 4 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-5738.

¹³² Sobanski to F.O., 18 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-200151. Gregory minute, 24 Oct. 1917, F.O. to Macdonogh, 2 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3017-209310. Macdonogh to F.O., 14 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3017-218625.

¹³³ Home office circular, 12 Mar. 1918, H.O. 45-10890-355329. Home office circular, 5 Feb. 1918, H.O. 45-10889-352661.

¹³⁴ Sobanski to Kell, 31 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3280-5738.

¹³⁵ Moylan memorandum, 8 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-7341.

determined to minimize the legal significance of both recognition and the arrangements which followed.

The manner in which consular privileges were given to the committee also showed that the officials suspected that the National Democrats would use these privileges against their political opponents. For that reason the government reserved the right to issue certificates to Poles not approved by the committee. The home office report on the conference stated: 'It was further made clear that the Polish National Committee was only an official Committee, and that there might be others, and that the National Committee had not, therefore, the exclusive right of issuing the certificate in question or similar certificates.'¹³⁶ Although British officials tended to accept the accusations made by the National Democrats against their opponents, they obviously did not trust the committee to use its power with impartiality. On this point Clerk wrote: 'This is of course necessary to ensure that the Committee should not use its certificates as a means for political pressure and to maintain the position we have consistently adopted, namely that the Committee is an official Polish Organization but not necessarily the only one'.¹³⁷

Although in practice the government treated the committee as the only Polish organization, it obviously intended to maintain its freedom of action. It also wanted to protect itself from the attacks of Dmowski's opponents by not appearing too closely associated with the National Democrats. To some extent these arrangements represented no more than official recognition of existing practices. Since 1916 the Polish Exiles Protection had exercised

¹³⁶ Moylan memorandum, 8 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-7341.

¹³⁷ Clerk to Moylan, 8 Jan. 1918, H.O. 45-10889-352661.

to a lesser degree similar consular privileges.¹³⁸ Another existing practice was given official recognition when the foreign office agreed to allow Sobanski to send correspondence through British diplomatic pouches.¹³⁹ In the United States the National Democrats, now under the authority of the Polish National Committee, continued their work on recruiting for the Polish army.¹⁴⁰

The recognition of the committee led, however, to one very significant innovation. The committee needed funds for propaganda, intelligence, administration and recruiting, but wanted to avoid being charged by its opponents as being paid agents of the Allies.¹⁴¹ It therefore asked the Allied governments for a loan of £12,000 per month, presumably to be repaid after the establishment of a Polish government. In January 1918 the British government agreed to pay its share of £3,000 per month with payments beginning in February 1918.¹⁴² These payments were unrelated to the cost of the Polish army which was also a responsibility of the Allied governments. The appointment by the Allied governments of agents to supervise the finances of the Polish National Committee show that repayment of this so-called loan was not expected.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ See above, pp. 125-127.

¹³⁹ F.O. to Howard, 15 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-6702. Graham to Sobanski, 19 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-200151.

¹⁴⁰ See above, pp. 240-241.

¹⁴¹ Clerk minute, 12 Dec. 1917, Hardinge minute, 14 Dec. 1917, Graham to treasury, 22 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-236697. Memorandum for D.M.I., 30 Dec. 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-106. Thwaites memorandum, 4 Nov. 1917, Wiseman Mss. 91-106. Wiseman to Drummond, 5 Feb. 1918, Wiseman Mss. 91-105.

¹⁴² Chalmers to F.O., 28 Dec. 1917, T 12-38. Balfour to Spring Rice, 3 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3002-244929. Sobanski to Clerk, 28 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-18075. Chalmers to F.O., 22 Feb. 1918, T 12-39.

¹⁴³ Derby to F.O., 8 June 1918, F.O. to Derby, 11 June 1918, F.O. 371-3277-102644.

With the formation of a Polish army in France and the recognition of the Polish National Committee Dmowski and the National Democrats had achieved a position of some importance. They reached the zenith of their influence on the British government, however, at the beginning of 1918, as a result of developments in Russia following the Bolshevik revolution. Despite the opposition of the Provisional government, the Russian military authorities, in collusion with the National Democrats, had created by August 1917 a Polish corps, under General Jozef Dowbor-Musnicki, within the Russian army.¹⁴⁴ The British war office, after initially disapproving of the disruption of the Russian army in order to create national units, began to take an interest in the Polish corps as the Russian army disintegrated after the failure of the Galician offensive in July 1917.¹⁴⁵ By November 1917 the government was seriously considering the possibility of supporting a Polish army in Russia directed against the Central powers.¹⁴⁶ Just before the Bolshevik seizure of power, Horodyski suggested the formation of Polish and Cossack units to assist the Rumanians, whose right flank was exposed by the collapse of the Russian army.¹⁴⁷ The plan was not unanimously supported by the military experts; the military attaché in Petrograd thought it would only lead to civil war and wrote to Macdonogh: 'I believe Poles simply wish to organize force to protect Polish landlords

¹⁴⁴ Buchanan to F.O., 29 May 1917, F.O. 371-3003-108390. M.I. 2e, 'Russian Policy towards Poland in Connection with the Polish Army in Russia', 27 April 1918, F.O. 371-3286-78150.

¹⁴⁵ W.O. to F.O., 4 June 1917, F.O. 371-3003-111457. Macdonogh to Drummond, 4 July 1917, F.O. 800-204. W.O. to Knox, August 1917, F.O. 800-384. Knox, 'Memorandum on National Armies', 15 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3012-218506.

¹⁴⁶ F.O. to Bertie, 26 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3018-225397.

¹⁴⁷ Spring Rice to F.O., 31 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3017-209501.

against their Russian peasantry'.¹⁴⁸ But such opinions had little effect on the British government once it became apparent that the Russian government intended to make a separate peace which might end all resistance to the Central powers in eastern Europe.¹⁴⁹ As already explained in the previous chapter in reference to the Czechoslovak army, the war cabinet decided on December 14, 1917, to support all military units in Russia prepared to continue the war against the Central powers.¹⁵⁰ The Allies sought to reconstruct some form of eastern front without the aid of the Bolsheviks by using the existing Polish, Czechoslovak, Cossack and Rumanian military forces. Dowbor-Musnicki's Polish corps was one of these units and on January 4, 1918, Bertie reported that the French government had allotted to it ten million roubles.¹⁵¹ On January 9, 1918, the foreign office asked the treasury to agree to share these costs with the French government.¹⁵² The establishment of this Polish army particularly enhanced the political influence of the National Democrats because, as one of the few armies on the eastern front still prepared to fight the Central powers, it appeared to be of major strategic importance. Frequent discussions about this army in the war cabinet, which almost never discussed other aspects of Polish affairs, are an indication of its importance.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Buchanan to Balfour, 14 Dec. 1917, F.O. 115-2318.

¹⁴⁹ J.W. Wheeler-Bennett, Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, London 1938, pp.75-99.

¹⁵⁰ See above, p. 209.

¹⁵¹ War cabinet 306, 26 Dec. 1917, Cab. 23-4. Bertie to F.O., 4 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-3658.

¹⁵² Langley to treasury, 9 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-2658. War cabinet 341, 8 Feb. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

¹⁵³ War cabinet 262, 1 Nov. 1917, Cab. 23-4. War cabinet 316, 7 Jan. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

In the negotiations which led to involvement in Polish affairs, the British government was primarily motivated by strategic considerations and not by the desire to pursue any particular programme for the future of Poland. Each initiative by the government was inspired by the need either to thwart German policy in Poland or to use the Poles, particularly in military units, as weapons of war. Although of secondary importance in the formation of policy, just as the Polish problem was of secondary importance to the conduct of the war, the government was not devoid of attitudes and even intentions on the future of Poland.

By making Polish independence possible, the Russian revolution added to the uncertainties of the Polish problem, uncertainties which reflected those within Russia itself. In the Provisional government's proclamation of March 29, 1917, the idea of autonomy within Russia was abandoned in favour of an independent Poland linked to Russia by a military alliance. The British government welcomed and supported the proclamation as it represented a solution to the Polish problem which would win Polish support while being consistent with British interests and on lines favoured by those in the government involved in Polish affairs.¹⁵⁴ The officials, when dealing with Polish affairs, now began to speak in terms of independence, but never made any attempt to explain the meaning of that term as it would actually be applied in the geographic area of Poland. Such problems, not clearly understood and complicated by uncertainty, were easier to avoid than solve. In any case the issue was not of immediate importance as it was by no means clear that independence could be achieved.

During 1917 Dmowski presented the foreign office with his programme

¹⁵⁴ See above, pp.230-233.

for the future of Poland, setting out territorial claims to which the Poles had only a debatable ethnographic case.¹⁵⁵ Namier attacked the claims of the National Democrats, whom he labelled 'Polish Imperialists', on the grounds that many of the areas were inhabited predominantly by Lithuanians, Byelorussians or Ukrainians.¹⁵⁶ Although the foreign office, with a weakness for the nationality principle, thought of Poland in ethnographic rather than historic terms, there is no evidence that it paid anything more than scant attention to these numerous memoranda about problems obviously not of immediate importance.¹⁵⁷ Within the foreign office, the only branch of the government in which the proposition was seriously discussed, opposition to a more forward policy on Polish independence was based almost entirely on the practical difficulties and not on any theoretical objections to independence. To varying degrees Balfour, Hardinge, Drummond, Clerk and Gregory all preferred the independence of Poland, not as an essential war aim of the British government, but as the best solution to the Polish problem.¹⁵⁸ The one exception was Cecil, who supported the government's policy of using the nationalities as weapons of war while disliking nationalism and national self-determination.¹⁵⁹ In essence the government seemed prepared to accept any solution to the Polish problem which did not increase German strength and which was acceptable to both the Poles and

¹⁵⁵ Dmowski memorandum, 26 Mar. 1917, F.O. 371-3000-63741.

¹⁵⁶ Namier minute, 6 June 1917, F.O. 371-3001-107526. Namier memorandum, 24 Aug. 1917, Cab. 24-24. Namier memorandum, 9 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-194676.

¹⁵⁷ Oman, 'Memorandum on the Boundaries of Poland', 3 April 1917, F.O. 371-3016-194676.

¹⁵⁸ Drummond and Balfour minutes, 9 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-193872. Balfour to Lansdowne, 22 Nov. 1917, Cab. 24-34. Clerk minute, 25 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-16767.

¹⁵⁹ Cecil to Strachey, 13 Nov. 1917, F.O. 800-196.

the Russians. But no one ever suggested continuing the war for the sake of Poland. For that reason the government scrupulously avoided commitments on the future of Poland during the negotiations on the formation of a Polish army and the recognition of the Polish National Committee.

During 1917 the war cabinet was hardly concerned with the negotiations on Polish affairs conducted, with its general approval, by the war office and the foreign office. The members of the cabinet, faced with a multitude of more important problems, showed little interest in Poland. The foreign office and the war office could do as they liked with the Poles as long as they made no commitments. Only then would it become a cabinet issue. The government's reluctance to accept commitments on the future of Poland resulted from the commonly held belief that if Russia collapsed such commitments could never be fulfilled.¹⁶⁰ Even if the Allies achieved victory in the west, itself by no means certain, the possibility of influencing, let alone dictating, the settlement of eastern Europe without an army there loyal to the Entente seemed remote indeed.¹⁶¹ According to Amery: 'without Russia we are powerless to dispute the settlement of the Polish, Roumanian and Serbian problems according to the wishes of the Central Powers'¹⁶² Similar pessimism inspired Cecil to write: 'At this stage in the war to adopt and proclaim as one of our war aims, as essential as the restoration of Belgium, the creation of an independent Polish Kingdom which would cut Prussia in two seems to me sheer lunacy'.¹⁶³ In September 1917, Lloyd George

¹⁶⁰ See above, pp. 183-185.

¹⁶¹ Amery, 'Possible Terms of Peace', 11 April 1917, Cab. 24-10. Cecil to Balfour, 10 July 1917, Cab. 1-25-4.

¹⁶² Amery, 'The Russian Situation and Its Consequences', 20 May 1917, Cab. 24-14.

¹⁶³ Cecil minute, 9 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3016-193872.

explained the problem quite clearly to Scott:

Who is going to restore it [Poland]. The Soviet and Russian government will not or cannot lift a finger and are we to do the work for them. We cannot be more Russian than the Russians. If Germany is asked to surrender all her gains on the East as well as to retrocede Alsace-Lorraine she will fight on for years and, with access to certain cornlands of Russia, she can do it. ¹⁶⁴

The seriousness of the situation was evident when the war cabinet, on September 24, 1917, considered the possibility of peace negotiations with Germany and expressed its willingness to consider any offer put forward by the Germans. The cabinet was fully aware that in such negotiations the only real inducement they could offer Germany for the restoration of Belgium was a free hand in eastern Europe. ¹⁶⁵ Whether the cabinet would have ever made such an offer in actual negotiations is debatable but the proposition certainly was considered. As long as victory was in doubt, the government could not undertake commitments on Poland which it might never have the power to honour and which would make a negotiated peace impossible. There is insufficient evidence to reveal the cabinet's attitude, if such existed, on the future of Poland. If the cabinet had a preference it might have agreed with the foreign office in sympathizing with the cause of Polish independence. But, above all, it had no intention of continuing the war for the sake of Poland.

Yet the government could not entirely avoid the question of some commitment to the Polish cause unless it was prepared to abandon the Poles to the Central powers. On September 12, 1917, the Central powers replaced the Council of State with a Regency Council designed to act as the head of state of the kingdom of Poland. They also delegated to the Regency Council

¹⁶⁴ Scott diary, 26-28 Sept. 1917, Scott Mss. 50904.

¹⁶⁵ War cabinet, 24 Sept. 1917, Cab. 23-16.

the administration of certain aspects of Polish internal affairs and pushed forward their own plans for a Polish army.¹⁶⁶ The émigrés who kept the government informed of these developments continually emphasized the need for some new Allied declaration on the future of Poland.¹⁶⁷ On October 3, 1917, Gregory explained, in a long minute, that the Polish National Committee wanted a declaration that: 'we consider the restoration of United Poland with free access to the sea as one of the essential objects of the war and an indispensable condition of peace and the balance of Europe'. He argued that such a declaration was impossible because: 'As things are at present, the prospect of our wresting Posen from Germany is not a good one, and it is clear that not one of the Allies would be willing to prolong the war by a day in order to do it'. He concluded, reluctantly, that the only declaration possible would be one expressing nothing more than a pious aspiration which would carry little conviction, have little effect on the Poles and do nothing to prevent them from supporting the Central powers.¹⁶⁸ More optimistically Clerk maintained that a pious statement involving no commitment would satisfy the Poles, and Hardinge concluded: 'So long as it is only a pious aspiration it does not much matter what is said'.¹⁶⁹ On October 15, 1917, with the permission of the foreign office and, in this case, of the prime minister, Buchanan associated himself at a public meeting with a statement by the Russian foreign minister that the creation

¹⁶⁶ Fischer, Germany's Aims, p.455.

¹⁶⁷ Howard to F.O., 26 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-206047. Howard to Hardinge, 4 Sept. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 34. Howard to F.O., 8 Sept. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-175905.

¹⁶⁸ Buchanan to F.O., 1 Oct. 1917, Gregory minute, 3 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-189230.

¹⁶⁹ Clerk and Hardinge minutes, 3 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-189230.

of an independent and indivisible Poland was one of the conditions of a solid and just peace.¹⁷⁰ The Poles had received their declaration of pious aspiration and, as intended, it was worthless.

As Gregory had so easily predicted the Poles found the statement completely unsatisfactory and continued to press for a commitment on the future of Poland. Howard, relying on his Polish sources, continued to report on the enemy's progress in forming a Polish army and urged that some Allied declaration was necessary to counteract what appeared to him a very real danger that the Central powers would gain Polish support and successfully form a Polish army.¹⁷¹ Balfour opposed issuing another declaration and commented on one of the reports: 'I do not understand why our recent very definite statements about Poland are systematically ignored.'¹⁷² Further action on the question was postponed until the meeting of the supreme war council in Paris at the beginning of December 1917. Since the beginning of the war the British government had followed, in its relations with the nationalities, the policy of using them while maintaining the option, by avoiding commitments, of pursuing such other alternatives as a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. At first the idea of a separate peace was totally unrelated to British policy in Polish

¹⁷⁰ Buchanan to F.O., 11 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-196716. Buchanan to F.O., 18 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3001-199530. Lindley, 'Summary of Events', 30 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-2997-218507.

¹⁷¹ Howard to F.O., 29 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-207473. Howard to F.O., 26 Oct. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-211205. Howard to F.O., 12 Nov. 1917, Hardinge minute, 14 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-216593. Howard to Hardinge, 17 Nov. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 35. Howard to F.O., 16 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-219884.

¹⁷² Balfour minute, 14 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-216593. Buchanan to F.O., 10 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-218639. Howard to F.O., 16 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-219884. War cabinet 279, 21 Nov. 1917, Cab. 23-4.

affairs because Poland was still considered a Russian sphere, and it was naturally assumed that in a separate peace the Habsburg monarchy would have to cede Galicia to Russia, whereupon it would be included in whatever form the new Poland assumed.¹⁷³ In August 1917 the government learned, through unofficial contacts, that the Emperor Karl was interested in a Habsburg confederation which would include a re-united Poland.¹⁷⁴ This knowledge gave the government an additional reason for avoiding commitments, for concessions on the future of Poland might prove useful in negotiations with Austria-Hungary. The announcement of an armistice between the Bolshevik government and the Central powers on November 30, 1917, by releasing the Allies from their obligations to Russia, made such concessions possible. When the supreme war council met in Paris on December 1, 1917, the British government was about to embark on the Smuts-Mensdorff conversations. These conversations represented the greatest opportunity yet presented to the Allies for a negotiated peace with Austria-Hungary, and as such undoubtedly influenced the British contribution to the discussion of a declaration on the future of Poland.¹⁷⁵

At the meeting of the supreme war council Stephen Pichon, the French foreign minister, proposed issuing a declaration on Polish independence and was supported by House, the American representative. According to the minutes, after Balfour raised some objections to the proposal:

Mr. Lloyd George said he was sorry to differ from his colleague Pichon, but he hoped we would not increase our obligations at the very moment when our military strength was debatable the present moment was most unpropitious, when we had almost

¹⁷³ Drummond memorandum, 12 Feb. 1917, Cab. 24-6.

¹⁷⁴ Beak to Langley, 21 July 1917, F.O. 371-2864-155578.

¹⁷⁵ Balfour to Rumbold, 30 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-2861-227704.

broken with Russia and had some hopes from Austria. He could understand the United States taking some such action, because they had a large Polish population, but he asked: Was the United States prepared to send an army to Poland? It was impossible to contemplate keeping the war going for two years to set up a Polish State.¹⁷⁶

The proposal was dropped at this meeting but was raised again by Balfour at a conference of Allied foreign ministers on December 3, 1917. Balfour presented the text of a declaration which he believed would have a good effect in Poland without adding to Allied war aims: 'The creation of a Poland, independent and indivisible, constitutes one of the conditions of a solid and just peace, and of the regime of right in Europe. The proper development of an independent State requires unrestricted access to the sea'. The statement was absolutely worthless as Balfour himself admitted when he added: 'The propositions contained in it were undeniable, and would not be embarrassing to us in the future'. He also explained, although it was hardly necessary, that access to the sea did not necessarily imply possession of part of the Baltic coast because it could be achieved by making the Vistula an international waterway. After some modifications because of objections from Sonnino, the following text was accepted by the conference: 'The creation of a Poland, independent and indivisible, under such conditions as will ensure her free political and economic development, constitutes one of the conditions of a solid and just peace, and of the regime of right in Europe.'¹⁷⁷

Allied agreement on this proposal left the problem unsolved because the text was unacceptable to the Polish National Committee. The committee

¹⁷⁶ Supreme war council, 2 Dec. 1917, Cab. 28-3.

¹⁷⁷ Conference of foreign ministers, 3 Dec. 1917, Cab. 23-3.

claimed that its publication would only have an adverse effect in Poland, and so after consultation the declaration was not published.¹⁷⁸ The Poles wanted a clear, unmistakable commitment and were not stupid enough to be deceived by a statement which entailed no obligation whatever. Despite continued warnings that some statement on Poland was necessary, the question was momentarily set aside.¹⁷⁹ On December 7, 1917, Hardinge wrote to Howard: 'Our principle object has been to encourage as much as possible those elements which we know to be in favour of the defeat of the Central Powers, but we have never been able to see our way sufficiently clear to adopt publicly a definite line'.¹⁸⁰

Before 1917, because the émigrés were not powerful enough to make demands on the government and because the alternatives to national self-determination were as yet only hypothetical, the government had encountered little difficulty in using the nationalities while maintaining its freedom of action. But the use of the nationalities implied, at least to the émigrés, support for national self-determination. If the émigrés decided to make their support contingent upon the government's acceptance of a commitment, the latter would have no choice but to forgo that co-operation or risk destroying the possibility of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. This problem did not arise with the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks because they made no demands on the government and maintained that their support was not conditional but absolute. By the end of 1917 the Polish émigrés

¹⁷⁸ Clerk minute, 12 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-234811. Clerk minute, 12 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-236697.

¹⁷⁹ Rumbold to F.O., 6 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-34811. Rumbold to F.O., 5 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-238348. Howard to Hardinge, 27 Dec. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 35.

¹⁸⁰ Hardinge to Howard, 7 Dec. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 35.

were in a position, because of the existence of two Polish armies, to make demands which the government could not ignore. The Polish leaders did not make direct demands upon the government, or threaten to withdraw their support, but they constantly warned the government, probably quite correctly, that if it did not accept a commitment it would definitely lose the support of the bulk of the Poles. However much the government might prefer to seek a separate peace with Austria-Hungary while simultaneously using the Poles, the course of events and the pressure from the Polish émigrés for a commitment forced it to make a choice between a negotiated peace or the use of the nationalities in total war.

The government chose a separate peace, accepting the risk of losing Polish support. The terms upon which it would have made peace, given the opportunity, can only be a matter of speculation. But there can be no doubt that in December 1917 it considered terms that were absolutely unacceptable to the Polish National Committee. On December 10, 1917, in his memorandum on possible terms of peace, Drummond recommended negotiating on the basis of a reconstituted Habsburg monarchy which would include a re-united Poland. He maintained that this solution would be in the best interests of eastern Europe and consistent with the interests of the British government.¹⁸¹ On December 13, 1917, in setting out for the cabinet the basis upon which he thought his discussions with Mensdorff should proceed, Smuts accepted Drummond's suggestion and, in reference to Poland, wrote: 'Cession of Galicia to Russian Poland; Poland thus reconstructed as Independent State to be linked in personal and commercial union to Austria-Hungary as third state of Empire'.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Drummond memorandum, 10 Dec. 1917, F.O. 800-200.

¹⁸² Smuts, 'Peace Conversations', 13 Dec. 1917, F.O. 800-214.

In the first months of 1918 the government's primary aim in eastern Europe was a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. It continued to use the Poles, but they were of secondary importance. Nevertheless French and American pressure for a meaningful declaration on Poland was increasing.¹⁸³ By forming the Polish army, the Allies had exposed themselves to the inevitable claims that they were indebted to the Poles. This approach was first used by Gregory on December 14, 1917:

It has moreover to be considered in this connection that the Allies have declared themselves favourable to the creation of a Polish army to fight on the Western front and the first steps have been taken to call such an army into existence. The Allies owe to this army a formal act by which it may be assured that it is not going to fight in vain and that in return for its services in the common cause an Allied effort at least will be made to secure the particular and which makes its recruitment possible.¹⁸⁴

A commitment might be postponed, but it could not be postponed indefinitely without the loss of Polish support. On January 5, 1918, Lloyd George, in speaking to the Trade Union Congress, tried once again to satisfy the Poles without committing the government: 'We believe, however, that an independent Poland, comprising all those genuinely Polish elements who desire to form part of it, is an urgent necessity for the stability of Western Europe'.¹⁸⁵ It was almost as if the government believed that an unacceptable statement would become acceptable by being repeated. But the Poles wanted a statement of intent, not belief. On January 10, 1918, the foreign office instructed Francis Lindley, the first secretary in Petrograd, to make a declaration to the Polish Council, the National Democratic organization in Russia, along the lines of the hitherto

¹⁸³ Clerk minute, 12 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-236697.

¹⁸⁴ Gregory minute, 14 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-236695.

¹⁸⁵ 'The Prime Minister's Speech', 5 Jan. 1918, F.O. 800-199. War cabinet 312, 3 Jan. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

unpublished statement formulated by the Allies in December 1917.¹⁸⁶ This declaration left the British government still uncommitted on the future of Poland.

¹⁸⁶ F.O. to Lindley, 10 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-3379.

Chapter VII

Commitment by Implication. 1918

On November 13, 1917, Sobanski suggested to Balfour that the Allies launch a political offensive against Austria-Hungary in order to drive her out of the war. The methods used by the Germans to create chaos in Russia might be used with equal success against the Habsburg monarchy.¹ The government did not seriously consider the proposal at this time because a programme designed to promote internal disorder within the Habsburg monarchy appeared to necessitate a commitment to the nationalities incompatible with the pursuit of a separate peace. As Gregory pointed out: 'There are only two apparent forms of "political offensive" possible, a separate peace with the lesser Powers of the enemy coalition or the stirring up of nationalist strife within the Dual Monarchy.'² Should a separate peace prove to be unattainable, the use of the nationalities in a total war against Austria-Hungary was the obvious alternative. If Austria-Hungary could not be used against Germany, then the nationalities would be used against Austria-Hungary. If Austria-Hungary would not leave the war, she would be driven out.

The government did not realize at any decisive moment that a separate peace was impossible but only came to this conclusion gradually. In the same way it did not decide at any particular moment to use the nationalities in a total war against Austria-Hungary. Such significance cannot be

¹ Sobanski to Balfour, 13 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-218943.

² Gregory minute, 18 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3002-218943.

attributed to any one decision. The more extensive use of the nationalities during 1918 developed gradually, simultaneous with the realization that a separate peace was impossible, and as the direct outgrowth of the earlier co-operation between the government and the nationalities. While a decision to use the nationalities to destroy Austria-Hungary was never taken, a host of less significant decisions, when combined in their historical context, had the same effect.

The change in British policy was a shift in emphasis rather than the complete abandonment of one course of action and the acceptance of another. In 1917 the government had not completely committed itself to the policy of a separate peace and had maintained its relations with the nationalities. During 1918 it did not totally abandon the idea of a separate peace, but instead, it gradually shifted the emphasis in its general policy, which was to use the problems of eastern Europe to its own strategic advantage, away from a separate peace and towards the disruption of the Habsburg monarchy. The shift went so far by November 1918 that the government was in essence supporting national self-determination in eastern Europe without ever having made a formal decision to do so.

As the government realized between December 1917 and April 1918 that a separate peace was impossible, it gradually began to consider negotiations not as an honest attempt to make peace with Austria-Hungary but as a means to weaken the Austrian war effort and embarrass the Central powers.³ In December 1917 this view prevailed in the foreign office, but by March 1918 it prevailed throughout the government. According to the minutes of the war cabinet for March 1, 1918:

³ Nicolson memorandum, 5 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3086-230895.

Mr. Balfour said he was certain that Austria would not accede to a peace such as we wanted. The Prime Minister agreed, but pointed out that, by continuing conversations a very important secondary object might be achieved, namely Austria might be deterred from making an attack and gradually reduced to a state of inactivity....⁴

This attitude towards negotiations was the first discernible step in the shifting of emphasis in British policy; the second can be seen in the changes in Allied propaganda. Before 1918 British propaganda had been directed entirely at Allied and neutral opinion, and no attempts had been made to influence public opinion in enemy countries. Offensive propaganda was impractical at the beginning of the war because it could only be effective when the enemy was almost exhausted. In December 1917 Christopher Addison, the minister of reconstruction, urged Lloyd George to adopt this type of warfare.⁵ The suggestion was not original - Tyrrell was thinking along similar lines - and sufficient records would probably show that, as a result of the apparent effects of German pacifist propaganda in Russia, the idea had a certain common currency.⁶ In February 1918 the government established the department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries with its headquarters at Crewe House and under the directorship of Lord Northcliffe, the newspaper publisher.⁷

It was almost inevitable that this department would attempt to influence foreign policy and that it would disagree with the foreign office. Northcliffe was responsible only to the prime minister, and while his department was expected to co-operate with other branches of the government

⁴ War cabinet, 1 Mar. 1918, Cab. 23-16.

⁵ Addison to Lloyd George, 13 Dec. 1917, Lloyd George Ms. F1-4-4.

⁶ H.W. Steed, The Fifth Arm, London 1940, p.14.

⁷ Hanak, Great Britain, pp.276-79. R. Pound and G. Harmsworth, Northcliffe, London 1959, p.613. Also see C. Stuart, Secrets of Crewe House, London 1920.

it was subservient to none of them.⁸ Combined with this freedom of action, not unusual for a propaganda agency, Crewe House had its own opinion, different from that of the foreign office, on what British war aims in eastern Europe should be. Northcliffe appointed Wickham Steed and Seton-Watson as the co-directors of propaganda against Austria-Hungary, and their views on war aims became those of Crewe House.⁹ Since, by the very nature of the situation, effective propaganda against Austria-Hungary had to be based on national self-determination, it was quite reasonable that the two foremost exponents of that doctrine should be appointed to conduct such propaganda. Had Crewe House been as willing as Wellington House to accept dictation from the foreign office on matters of foreign policy, there would have been fewer problems. But Northcliffe, Wickham Steed and Seton-Watson, a dangerous combination of megalomania, self-righteousness and crusading spirit, were reluctant to accept dictation from the foreign office, and, because of their independence, not obliged to do so. According to Peter Chalmers Mitchell, the liaison officer between Crewe House and the war office, Northcliffe was responsible for a major innovation in Allied propaganda in that: 'The inspiring principle of the new operation was that propaganda should depend upon policy.'¹⁰ This claim is not strictly accurate because Wellington House had always sought to tailor its propaganda to the government's policy and had only failed to do so, as in the case of national self-determination, when that policy was not clearly defined. Northcliffe's innovation was not that he made propaganda consistent with

⁸ File on activities of Crewe House, Seton-Watson Mss. IV.

⁹ Steed to Northcliffe, 7 Mar. 1918, Steed Mss. H.W. Steed, Through Thirty Years, London 1924, vol.II, pp.185-220. Stuart, Crewe House, p.11.

¹⁰ Mitchell, 'Propaganda', Inf. 4-4a, p.12.

policy but that he tried to alter foreign policy to make it consistent with propaganda formulated by Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed.

On February 24, 1918, Northcliffe informed Balfour, in a letter drafted by Wickham Steed, that Austria-Hungary was the best target for propaganda and enquired as to the nature of Allied policy towards her.¹¹ He suggested that his department (and the government) had two alternatives: '(a) To work for a separate peace ... or (b) To try to break the power of Austria-Hungary, as the weakest link in the chain of enemy States, by supporting and encouraging all anti-German and pro-Ally peoples and tendencies.' Northcliffe himself was certain which policy should be followed: 'The (a) policy has been tried without success It remains to try the (b) policy.' The ultimate aim would be 'not to form a number of small disjointed States, but to create a non-German Confederation of Central European and Danubian States.' In order to carry out this policy it would be necessary for the Allied governments to state clearly their determination to secure 'government by the consent of the governed' for the subject nationalities, to avoid all statements which might give substance to the belief that they did not wish to dismember Austria-Hungary, and to work for a reconciliation between the Yugoslavs and the Italians. Through the Bohemian National Alliance, the Yugoslav Committee and various Polish organizations, Crewe House already had at its disposal the facilities to disseminate propaganda in Austria-Hungary. All that was necessary was official approval.¹²

This letter, which Drummond considered 'pure Steed', tried to force on the foreign office the dilemma of having to make a clear and irrevocable

¹¹ Steed, Thirty Years, pp.191-205, Fifth Arm, pp.15-31.

¹² Northcliffe to Balfour, 24 Feb. 1918, Cab. 24-43-GT 3762.

choice between Austria-Hungary and the subject nationalities.¹³ The foreign office had always sought to avoid this decision because, as long as a separate peace was possible, any choice would limit the government's freedom of action. In Cecil's opinion: 'The (b) policy as stated seems to involve an indefinite prolongation of the war.'¹⁴ But, as Drummond suggested to Balfour, the two courses of action proposed by Northcliffe were not necessarily, in the initial stages, mutually exclusive. For the moment Crewe House could base its propaganda on national self-determination without any decision from the government on the fate of Austria-Hungary. Following this suggestion, Balfour replied to Northcliffe:

As you point out with unanswerable force, everything which encourages the anti-German elements in the Habsburg dominions really helps to compel the Emperor and the Court to a separate peace, and also diminishes the efficiency of Austria-Hungary as a member of the Middle-Europe combination. The Emperor, by these means, might be induced or compelled, fundamentally to modify the constitution of his own State. If he refused to lend himself to such a policy, the strengthening of the non-German elements might bring about the same and even more effectually than if he lent his assistance to the process. But in either case the earlier stages of that process are the same, and a propaganda which aids the struggle of the nationalities now, subject either to Austrian Germans or to Magyar Hungarians towards freedom and self-determination must be right, whether the complete break-up of the Austrian Empire or its de-Germinisation under Habsburg rule be the final goal of our efforts.¹⁵

Not unnaturally Northcliffe was dissatisfied with this decision and he replied:

The two policies may not be mutually exclusive, in the last resort, but it is very important that one or the other of them should be given absolute precedence. It would place me in an awkward predicament if, after basing vigorous propaganda on the (b) policy, I were confronted with some manifestation of the (a) policy on the part of the British or other Allied Government.¹⁶

¹³ Drummond to Balfour, 25 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800-213.

¹⁴ Cecil minute, 25 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800-213.

¹⁵ Balfour to Northcliffe, 26 Feb. 1918, Cab. 24-43-GT 3762.

¹⁶ Northcliffe to Balfour, 27 Feb. 1918, Cab. 24-43-GT 3762.

On March 5, 1918, the war cabinet settled the issue by authorizing Northcliffe's plan for a propaganda campaign on condition that:

- a. No promise should be made to the subject races in Austria which we could not redeem: for example, we must not promise complete independence if the best we could get was autonomy. b. Lord Northcliffe agreed to show the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs the leaflets he proposes to issue, in order to ensure that it might not be possible later on to charge the British Government with a breach of faith. ¹⁷

Crewe House began the campaign against Austria-Hungary by concentrating its efforts on the Italian front where the Austrians were most accessible. Before the major enemy offensive expected within two months, Crewe House hoped to weaken the enemy's military capacity through propaganda aimed at the subject nationalities within the Austrian army, particularly the South Slavs.¹⁸ But this propaganda could only be conducted successfully with the co-operation of the Yugoslav Committee and the Italian propaganda authorities. Before the actual campaign could begin, therefore, Crewe House had to reconcile these two hostile groups so that they would be able to work together. Steed had, in fact, been working on such a reconciliation for some time, but now, with his appointment to Crewe House, these activities became quasi-official.¹⁹ In March 1918, at the instigation of Crewe House, representatives of the Yugoslav Committee and the Italian department of propaganda met in London and worked out an agreement later entitled the pact of Rome. In the agreement, signed on March 7, 1918, the Italians accepted the unity and independence of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavs accepted the completion of Italian unification, and both accepted the division of Habsburg Adriatic territories according to the principle of nationality.²⁰

¹⁷ War cabinet 359, 5 Mar. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

¹⁸ Northcliffe to Balfour, 27 Feb. 1918, Cab. 24-43-GT 3762.

¹⁹ Steed, Thirty Years, pp.168-185.

²⁰ Hanak, Great Britain, pp.198-200.

The agreement was the first step in a superficial reconciliation, but it lacked official significance because the participants had no authority to speak for anyone other than themselves. On March 9, 1918, when Trumbic presented the agreement to the foreign office at an interview arranged by Steed, Cecil stated that the British government was pleased that the Italians and Yugoslavs had agreed but was careful to avoid any further comment on the pact.²¹ Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed might be employed by the government, but the foreign office did not consider that their action reflected or affected foreign policy. Since the Italian government took the same attitude towards its propaganda agents, any agreement between them and the Yugoslavs, considered operative only in the field of propaganda, in no way affected either Italian war aims or the treaty of London.²²

The initial agreement between the Italians and the Yugoslavs was followed by the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, - the Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs, Poles, Rumanians and Italians - which took place in Rome in April 1918. Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed participated in the calling of this congress, and both attended supposedly as representatives of Great Britain, but not of the British government.²³ When questioned in the house of commons about their presence at the congress, Cecil replied: 'Lord Northcliffe, after consultation with the Foreign Office, delegated Mr. Steed to proceed to Italy as his representative to study there certain aspects of questions relating to propaganda.'²⁴

²¹ Cecil to Balfour, 9 Mar. 1918, Cecil Mss. 51093.

²² Zeman, Habsburg Monarchy, p.191.

²³ Hanak, Great Britain, pp.260-261. May, Habsburg Monarchy, pp.596-604. Cecil to Rodd, 18 Mar. 1918, Cecil Mss. 51093. Steed to Cecil, 19 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-75021. Steed to Northcliffe, 13 April 1918, F.O. 371-3135-66616. Rodd to Balfour, 10 April 1918, F.O. 371-3135-66462.

²⁴ Parliamentary Debates, Commons, vol. 105, col. 188, 16 April 1918.

The Congress of Oppressed Nationalities was an affair in which Crewe House alone was involved; the foreign office was scarcely interested. It was considered an aspect of Allied propaganda but not otherwise related to foreign policy. On April 29, 1918, Balfour told the house of commons that 'the conference was not official, and there has been no question of the adoption of the resolutions by the Allied Government.'²⁵ The Italian government adopted a similar attitude by refusing either to appoint official representatives to the congress or to recognize its resolutions.²⁶ The congress did, however, achieve its immediate aim of a reconciliation between the Yugoslav émigrés and the Italian propaganda authorities sufficient to enable them to co-operate in the anti-Habsburg propaganda campaign. But the real differences remained unresolved.

While in Italy Steed assisted in the creation of the Inter-Allied Propaganda Commission to co-ordinate the attack on Austria-Hungary and arranged for the production of propaganda leaflets.²⁷ After consultation with the Italian authorities and the British military representatives, it was agreed that the best way to appeal to the subject nationalities in the Habsburg army would be for the Czechoslovaks, Poles and Yugoslavs to issue proclamations of independence which would be recognized and publicized by the Allied governments.²⁸ On April 4, 1918, the foreign office, acting on a request from Steed, agreed to recognize such declarations but added that it could not undertake to fulfill them.²⁹ This decision signified a

²⁵ Parliamentary Debates, Commons, vol. 105, col. 1270, 29 April 1918.

²⁶ Zeman, Habsburg Monarchy, p.192.

²⁷ May, Habsburg Monarchy, pp.604-9. Hanak, Great Britain, pp.276-8.

²⁸ Steed, Thirty Years, p.205.

²⁹ Delme-Radcliffe to D.M.I., 2 April 1918, Northcliffe to Steed, 4 April 1918, F.O. 371-3134-59242. Steed, Fifth Arm, p.29.

slight modification of the restriction placed on Crewe House by the war cabinet that it was not to promise independence to the subject nationalities, but it does not appear to have been taken very seriously by the government. It was certainly never invested with the importance that Steed attributes to it. The foreign office never referred to it again, and did not consider it either as a reflection of foreign policy or as an act involving a commitment. Crewe House could embarrass the government by making promises that could not be fulfilled or by misrepresenting British policy, but it had no power to commit the government.

The campaign against Austria-Hungary began in April 1918 and consisted largely of the dissemination of leaflets, either smuggled across the lines or dropped from aircraft, through the Austrian army.³⁰ This propaganda was designed to appeal to the separatist tendencies within Austria-Hungary so as to demoralize the army and encourage the desertion of soldiers belonging to the subject nationalities. In May 1918 Seton-Watson was sent to Switzerland to arrange for the smuggling of propaganda into Austria-Hungary through the Czechoslovak system of communication which offered extensive facilities for the dissemination of propaganda.³¹ In reporting to Lloyd George, Northcliffe stated:

Though no binding assurances have been given, or engagements entered into, a very precise impression has been conveyed, under my responsibility, that this country, at least, favours a policy of liberation of the Habsburg subject races with a view to their constitution, in the event of an Allied victory, into a non-German polity, or Danubian Confederation.³²

³⁰ Northcliffe memorandum, 14 May 1918, H.O. 139-37. Steed memorandum, 27 May 1918, Steed Mem. Committee for Propaganda in Enemy Countries, 27 May 1918, F.O. 371-3474-99386.

³¹ F.O. to Rumbold, 20 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-90068. F.O. to Rumbold, 27 May 1918, F.O. 371-3474-94400.

³² Northcliffe to Lloyd George, 28 April 1918, Lloyd George Ms. F41-8-8. May, Habsburg Monarchy, p.608.

It has always been believed that the campaign against the Austrian army substantially contributed to the failure of the Austrian Piave offensive in June 1918.³³ The government's decision to use the nationalities and to appeal to their separatist tendencies through propaganda against Austria-Hungary illustrates the shifting of emphasis during the spring of 1918 away from the idea of a separate peace and towards the destruction of the Habsburg monarchy. Balfour's reply to Northcliffe on February 26, 1918, on the subject of offensive propaganda clearly reflects the official attitude of the moment.³⁴ Determined to avoid an absolute and possibly irrevocable decision on the future of Austria-Hungary, the government would not completely abandon the prospect of a separate peace but was prepared to sanction greater use of the nationalities. This shifting of emphasis in official policy continued after February 1918 as the course of events seemed to confirm the impossibility of a separate peace. After the failure of the Kerr mission in March 1918 and after the French government published the Sixte letter in April 1918, only the most die-hard optimist could still advocate negotiations.³⁵ On May 21, 1918, the foreign office, with Lloyd George's approval, informed Lord Derby, the new ambassador in Paris, that:

We feel that policy of trying to detach Austria from Germany must be abandoned as both inopportune and impracticable.... We think that best plan is to give all possible support to oppressed nationalities in Austria in their struggle against German-Magyar domination. Austria may thus be reduced to a reasonable frame of mind.³⁶

³³ May, Habsburg Monarchy, p.718.

³⁴ See above, p. 276.

³⁵ Wiseman to Drummond, 3 June 1918, F.O. 800-223. May, Habsburg Monarchy, p.631. See above, pp. 193-194.

³⁶ F.O. to Derby, 21 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-89828.

The Allies encountered some difficulties, however, in giving all possible support to the nationalities, and, in return, using them against the Central powers. On January 26, 1918, Dowbor-Musnicki's Polish army in Russia, which the Allies had agreed to support if it continued to fight against the Central powers, came into conflict with the Bolsheviks.³⁷ According to the minutes of the war cabinet Lloyd George was not interested in paying Poles to fight Bolsheviks:

In regard to the Polish movement, he gathered that the Polish armies in question were engaged not in fighting the Germans and Austrians, but in fighting the Bolsheviks. This was no concern of ours, and they could only be regarded as our friends if they diverted their armies against the Germans or Austrians or, as was suggested, to the assistance of our Roumanian Allies.³⁸

On February 25, 1918, Dowbor-Musnicki signed an agreement with the Germans which ended his army's involvement in the conflict.³⁹ In the words of General Sir Henry Wilson, the chief of the imperial general staff, it was an act 'tantamount to joining the enemy.'⁴⁰ For the National Democrats who had urged the government to support this army, Dowbor-Musnicki's desertion was a setback because it gave their opponents an opportunity to cast doubt on their loyalty to the Entente. For the foreign office, which had always supported the National Democrats against their critics, it was, to say the least, an embarrassment. The foreign office had good reason to look upon this incident with chagrin because if it had understood Polish affairs, it might have predicted Dowbor-Musnicki's desertion. Before

³⁷ M.I. 2e, 'Russian Policy towards Poland in connection with the Polish Army in Russia', 27 April 1918, F.O.371-3280-78150. Knox to D.M.I., 6 Feb. 1918, F.O.371-3280-25758. Drummond to Reading, 7 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800-222. P.S. Wandycz, Soviet-Polish Relations, 1917-1921, Cambridge 1969, pp.54-57.

³⁸ War cabinet 341, 8 Feb. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

³⁹ Wardrop to F.O., 2 Mar. 1918, Namier memorandum 22 Feb.1918, Cab.24-43.

⁴⁰ War cabinet 358, 4 Mar. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

deciding to support this army the government had been warned by its military attaché in Petrograd that the Poles were not interested in fighting the Germans but only in protecting their own property.⁴¹ On December 27, 1917, Howard had written to Hardinge:

I am afraid the Poles, that is to say all the propertied classes, are rapidly drifting away from us. If the Russian revolution has brought the working-classes closer to Russia it has certainly had the effect of making the propertied classes look to Germany as their only hope for saving something out of the general wreck I have been told that even Mr. Dmowski now shares this view, but this of course may be only a canard.⁴²

Before the Russian revolution the conservative Poles had supported Russia, and therefore the Entente, while the Polish left-wing, inspired by a hatred of reactionary Russia, had gravitated towards the Central powers. But the Russian revolution, by replacing Europe's most reactionary government with its most radical, turned Polish politics upside down, reversing what had come to be accepted as a static pattern. The natural political affinities of the conservatives now lay with the Central powers while those of the Polish left-wing with Russia. As successive Russian governments became more radical, the various Polish political parties gradually adjusted their positions according to the new situation. In Russia, Lednicki replaced Wielopolski as the Polish leader most closely associated with the Russian government.⁴³ In Poland, Pilsudski withdrew his support from the Council of State in July 1917 while the National Democrats gradually began to co-operate with it.⁴⁴ The British government

⁴¹ See above, p. 257.

⁴² Howard to Hardinge, 27 Dec. 1917, Hardinge Mss. 35.

⁴³ See above, pp. 249-50.

⁴⁴ Rumbold to F.O., 19 April 1918, F.O. 371-3278-69989. Komarnicki, Rebirth, p. 117.

was aware of the changes in Polish politics in Russia but does not appear to have understood the situation in Poland.⁴⁵ For that reason, the action of National Democrats in Poland never caused it to doubt the loyalty of the Polish National Committee. Since the army had been formed by the National Democrats, it had a definite conservative bias which made conflict with the Bolsheviki more likely than conflict with the Germans. Dowbor-Musnicki's apparent desertion to the Central powers was perfectly reasonable given the situation in which he, a former tsarist officer, operated. As Namier explained:

They have formed that Army under conditions and on lines which in the long run could lead to one result only. Nature takes its course, politics have their iron laws no less than physics. The Polish National Democrats stand for social Conservatism and Polish Imperialism. Since the Russian Revolution Germany has been the stronghold of social Conservatism in Eastern Europe, and conquests at the expense of Russia can obviously never be made otherwise than with German help Considering the interests for which the Polish Army stood and was meant to stand by its organisers, the compromise which they have concluded with Germany must be described as the logic, and not as an irony, or history.⁴⁶

The foreign office had no immediate reason to distrust the Polish National Committee because the Russian revolution did not cause the Poles in Britain to reverse their positions. Before 1917 the Polish left-wing in Britain under Zaleski had not strictly adhered to the policy adopted by its counterpart in Poland which co-operated with the Central powers. Zaleski had to adopt a position more favourable to the Entente or risk internment. After the revolution the National Democrats in western Europe maintained their commitment to the Entente regardless of the actions of their supporters elsewhere. Dmowski and his associates on the Polish National

⁴⁵ See above, pp. 249-50.

⁴⁶ Namier memorandum, 21 Mar. 1918, Cab. 24-46-GT 4016.

Committee were too involved in the war against Germany to change their position. Nevertheless, the British government, without fully comprehending recent developments in Poland, gave official recognition to a Polish committee dominated by conservatives at almost the precise moment that political developments were occurring elsewhere which might weaken their support for the Entente or cause them to change their political allegiance.

Dmowski and Horodyski made a mistake by maintaining overt contact with their associates in Russia who were unable, because of local conditions, to follow the policy of the Polish National Committee. Since Horodyski had convinced the British government to subsidize Dowbor-Musnicki's army, its actions could not but reflect unfavourably upon him and the Polish National Committee.⁴⁷ Dowbor-Musnicki's timing was unfortunate for he acted just when the foreign office was having second thoughts about its recognition of the committee. In the latter part of 1917 the foreign office had been criticized for its close association with the National Democrats by a number of groups who preferred Zaleski and the Polish Information Committee. On September 6, 1917, Seton-Watson had, in the New Europe, warned the government of the dangers of accepting Dmowski's Polish policy with its extensive territorial aims.⁴⁸ In July and November 1917 similar warnings had come from the Jewish community which could not approve of the government's close relations with a political movement openly and rabidly anti-Semitic, and on December 7, 1917, the Manchester Guardian criticized the government's official recognition of the Polish National Committee.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ War cabinet 429, 11 June 1918, Cab. 23-14.

⁴⁸ New Europe, vol. IV, no. 47, 6 Sept. 1917.

⁴⁹ Wolf memorandum, 9 July 1917, F.O. 371-3001-147721. Wolf to Cecil, 26 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3019-226666. H. Frankel, Poland: The Struggle for Power, London 1946, pp.82-83.

This opposition had no effect on the government's decision to recognize the committee or on those officials, like Gregory, who were such partisans of Dmowski that they considered his opponents the enemies of the Entente.⁵⁰ But it seems to have affected Cecil who had never been enamoured with Dmowski and who found anti-Semitism extremely distasteful.⁵¹ He could not accept the accusation that Dmowski's opponents were necessarily pro-German and on December 27, 1917, wrote:

The whole question seems to me to be whether Lednicki or Dmowski represents the majority of the Poles. My own impression is that Lednicki does and if so I see no sense in our putting ourselves in opposition to him - though I have no wish to quarrel with Dmowski either - unless his plans will really help our enemies.⁵²

It appears that Cecil was not alone in suspecting the National Democrats and that such suspicions prevented the foreign office from completely committing itself to the Polish National Committee. It had only recognized the committee as an official Polish organization and had carefully reserved the right to recognize other Polish organizations.⁵³ A number of incidents show that the foreign office had no desire to eliminate completely its contact with Dmowski's opponents. On December 24, 1917, the foreign office rejected a request from the war office to deport Zaleski.⁵⁴ On December 26, 1917, in reference to the problem of aid for Polish refugees in Russia, Balfour decided that it should be given to all refugees regardless

⁵⁰ Gregory minutes, 29 Nov. 1917, 10 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3019-226666.

⁵¹ Cecil minute, 29 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371-3019-226666. Cecil minute, 12 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3019-226994.

⁵² Cecil minute, 27 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3019-241740. Cecil minute, 5 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-3361.

⁵³ See above, p. 255.

⁵⁴ F.O. to W.O., 24 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371-3019-226994.

of their political affiliations:

Such action might give an opportunity for the Council of Regency and Poles in Poland itself to try to get into closer touch with Allies than they have hitherto done. It would also tend to counter-act belief that we were backing one party only and not Poland as a whole. ⁵⁵

Dowbor-Musnicki's desertion was a setback for the National Democrats but, despite the doubts expressed about them in the foreign office, it did not substantially weaken their influence on those government departments with which they had always had close relations. The monthly payments to the Polish National Committee were continued, and the foreign office assured Reading that: 'We have every reason to maintain our confidence in the Committee and give it our support. Its policy is entirely favourable to the Allied Cause and is constantly directed towards keeping the Poles from a compromise with the Central Powers.'⁵⁶ Horodyski's relations with the foreign office remained unimpaired as is indicated by the fact that when the ministry of information was seeking a Polish agent, in March 1917, Drummond recommended him and praised his work for the Entente.⁵⁷ When the leaders of various Polish organizations associated with Zaleski formed the Council of the Polish Community in Great Britain and protested against the privileged position of the Polish National Committee, the foreign office supported the home office in opposing any changes in the consular privileges of the Polish National Committee or the recognition of any other committee.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Balfour to Spring Rice, 26 Dec. 1917, F.O. 115-2303.

⁵⁶ F.O. to Reading, 23 April 1918, F.O. 371-3277-70004.

⁵⁷ Beaverbrook to Hall, 4 Mar. 1918, Drummond to Beaverbrook, 7 Mar. 1918, Drummond to Macdonogh, 22 April 1918, Macdonogh to Drummond, 8 May 1918, F.O. 800-385.

⁵⁸ F.O. to H.O., 13 May 1918, F.O. 371-3280-81294. Majdewicz to H.O., H.O., 18 Mar. 1918, H.O. 45-10889-352661.

The home office, which had long been under the influence of the National Democrats, was convinced that Dmowski's opponents were both corrupt and pro-German.⁵⁹ Military intelligence also continued to support the National Democrats and in May 1918, with the approval of the foreign office, banned the export of Zaleski's periodical The Polish Review.⁶⁰ When the foreign office received reliable reports about the fate of Dowbor-Musnicki's army, Gregory wrote, with greater charity than had ever been shown towards Zaleski:

It is evidently impossible to judge the action of these independent and isolated corps by our standards. They appear to be full of inconsistency and compromise. But the Poles are very subtle and have got their own ideas as to the line they intend to pursue - which will probably be neither pro- nor anti-German. At all events we ought to suspend judgement and revise our conclusion that Dowbor-Musnicki has gone irrevocably over to the enemy.⁶¹

The cabinet which, unlike the foreign office, had never had close contact with the Polish émigrés was not as willing to excuse Dowbor-Musnicki's desertion. On the next occasion upon which Horodyski presented proposals to the war cabinet, they were not well received. According to its minutes:

In the one matter in which Count Horodyski had been tried he had failed us. The Prime Minister referred to a Polish army which Count Horodyski had induced us to support and which had eventually turned around and joined with the enemy. That was the one real test we had of his bona fides.⁶²

Although Horodyski's relations with the foreign office remained unimpaired, he was discredited in the eyes of the cabinet. With such a scapegoat, however, the cabinet did nothing to alter the official relationship with the Polish National Committee. There were, however some

⁵⁹ Crowe to H.O., 9 May 1918, Waller minute, 29 Mar. 1918, H.O. 45-10889-352661.

⁶⁰ D.M.I. to F.O., 11 May 1918, F.O. to D.M.I., 17 May 1918, F.O. 371-3281-84759.

⁶¹ Gregory minute, 11 April 1918, F.O. 371-3280-63936.

⁶² War cabinet 429, 11 June 1918, Cab. 23-14.

developments at this time which might, over a long period, weaken the position of the National Democrats.

In 1918 criticism of official policy surpassed anything experienced by the government in the first years of the war. The Union of Democratic Control was particularly active in attacking official policy on peace negotiations, war aims and Anglo-Russian relations.⁶³ Noel Buxton found the government's association with the National Democrats an obvious target when, on April 16, 1918, he asked Cecil in the house of commons: 'Can the Noble Lord explain how it came about that Mr. Dmowski's [sic] party, which proved to be the most disloyal section of the Poles, was selected by the Foreign Office as the most loyal section?' Cecil replied: 'I do not think it would be fair to Mr. Dmowski [sic] to identify him with the most disloyal section.'⁶⁴ There is no evidence that such criticism had any positive effect on foreign policy in the sense of causing actions or decisions in relation to the National Democrats which would not have otherwise been taken. This criticism certainly did not cause the government to withdraw support from the Polish National Committee. But it is evident that the foreign office now, for the first time during the war, became sensitive to public opinion and to attacks on it in parliament. It now felt constrained to avoid actions which would obviously provoke further criticism.⁶⁵ It is possible that in the absence of such criticism the government would have associated itself even more closely with the Polish National Committee.

⁶³ May, Habsburg Monarchy, pp.547-53. Also see M. Swartz, 'The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During World War I', Yale Ph.D., 1969.

⁶⁴ Parliamentary Debates, Commons, vol. 105, col. 188, 16 April 1918.

⁶⁵ Gregory minute, 17 May 1918, F.O. 371-3281-84759. Clerk minute, 26 July 1918, F.O. 371-3281-135129.

In February 1918 the intelligence bureau of the department of information was transferred to the foreign office and became, under Tyrrell, the political intelligence department.⁶⁶ The significance of this reorganization should not be overestimated as the personnel, powers and functions of this department remained largely unchanged. During the rest of the war it produced more verbiage than almost any other department of the foreign office without causing substantial changes in policy. But, as part of the foreign office, it was at least in a better position to work for a reorientation of British policy. This reorganization helped Zaleski because the department, under Namier's influence, opposed Dmowski and for the first time gave Zaleski support within the foreign office. Namier continued, as he had always done, to attack Dmowski's territorial aims in eastern Europe which he contended included areas inhabited by Lithuanians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians.⁶⁷ He argued that it was not in British interests to support Dmowski because Polish expansion at the expense of Russia would necessitate Polish dependence on Germany:

Poland lies between Germany and Russia and never can be equal in strength to either, still less superior to both together. She can make conquests only in one direction. Any aggrandisement at the expense of Russia implies therefore dependence on German protection.⁶⁸

The foreign office disapproved of Polish expansion at the expense of Russia as much as Namier. As the Balkan negotiations had shown, it believed in the nationality principle - the drawing of frontiers according to

⁶⁶ War cabinet 349, 19 Feb. 1918, Cab. 23-5.

⁶⁷ Namier memorandum, 26 April 1918, F.O. 371-4359-PID72. Namier memorandum, 3 May 1918, F.O. 371-3278-74361. Namier memorandum, 25 April 1918, Cab. 24-50-GT 4439.

⁶⁸ Namier, 'Weekly Report on Poland', 21 Mar. 1918, Cab. 24-46-GT 4016.

nationality - and had always thought of a reconstructed Poland in ethnographic terms. It had never sanctioned Dmowski's territorial claims, and Balfour himself was adamantly opposed to Polish acquisition of non-Polish areas.⁶⁹ But while fundamentally agreeing with Namier, the foreign office did not accept his assessment of the National Democrats. As it appeared to involve long-term British interests, Namier considered Dmowski's territorial claims the fundamental issue in Anglo-Polish relations, but the foreign office, more concerned about immediate problems in the conduct of the war, considered the territorial question of minor importance. None of Namier's arguments could outweigh the fact that the Polish National Committee was apparently following a more anti-German policy than its opponents and, above all, that it was making a considerable contribution to the war effort. Just as Dmowski was too committed to the Entente to reverse his policy, the Entente was now too committed to the Polish National Committee to abandon it in favour of its opponents.⁷⁰

Even if the foreign office had considered the territorial question as seriously as did Namier, it probably would not have accepted his conclusions. In formulating its Polish policy the foreign office was always plagued by its failure to find an adviser whose knowledge and objectivity inspired it with confidence. Those, including Namier, who knew something about Poland seemed biased, while those who were objective were ignorant of Polish affairs. As Clerk explained:

There is unfortunately no prominent authority on whom one can rely for accurate information as to political sentiments in Poland. There is no one from whom we can derive information as to the cross currents of Polish politics and the underlying aims

⁶⁹ See above, pp.259-61.

⁷⁰ F.O. to Rumbold, 2 July 1918, F.O. 371-3278-92307.

of Polish political leaders, as for instance Dr. Seton-Watson has enabled us to do in the case of the Yugoslavs: nor is there any Pole in a position in any way analogous to that of Professor Masaryk among the Czechs, who can speak with recognized and impartial authority.⁷¹

In practice the foreign office and military intelligence often relied upon Horodyski for advice on Polish politics and particularly for his judgement of the bona fides of other Polish émigrés. This practice gave Horodyski immense influence and, in part, explains why the National Democrats were able to win the good opinion of the government while blackening their opponents' reputations.⁷² On February 8, 1918, acting on Balfour's instructions, Drummond sought an independent opinion by asking the director of naval intelligence to undertake a study of Polish politics.⁷³ Military intelligence had already been so influenced by the National Democrats that it was incapable of objectivity. But, since the results of the investigation by naval intelligence were not complete until June 1918, the foreign office had to work until then with advisers and information in which it lacked complete confidence.⁷⁴ It was therefore unlikely to sacrifice the immediate advantages of Polish co-operation because of Namier's possibly faulty calculations of long-term British interests. Even if Namier's facts were accepted, the most ardent of Dmowski's supporters in the foreign office, like Drummond, were prepared to argue that his fears were groundless because as long as a reconstituted Poland included Posen it would be estranged from Germany.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Clerk minute, 18 July 1917, F.O. 371-3012-133576.

⁷² See above, pp.134-36.

⁷³ Drummond to Hall, 8 Feb. 1918, Hall to Drummond, 19 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800-204.

⁷⁴ Cecil minute, Namier memorandum, 12 April 1918, F.O. 371-4359-PID22.

⁷⁵ Drummond to Balfour, 4 May 1918, F.O. 371-3278-74361.

The incorporation of the P.I.D. into the foreign office did not effect a reorientation of Britain's Polish policy, but it did afford Namier greater protection from the attacks of the National Democrats. When Dmowski's organ, the Tygodnik Polski, attacked Namier, the foreign office warned Dmowski that further attacks on officials of the foreign office would result in the discontinuation of financial support for the Polish National Committee.⁷⁶ It also resulted in the establishment of contact between the foreign office and the Bureau Polonais de Presse in Berne which was associated with the Council of Regency in opposition to Dmowski's Agence Polonaise Centrale.⁷⁷

During the first half of 1918 the National Democrats were able to maintain their predominant position in Allied countries, although in the defection of Dowbor-Musnicki's army they lost one of their greatest assets. They came under increasing public criticism and even attack from within the government itself, but they were reasonably secure as long as they were useful to the Allies in the conduct of the war.

The shifting of emphasis in British policy away from a separate peace is clearly evident in the government's relations with the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks. In April 1918 British interest in the Yugoslavs centred on the problem of recruits for the Serbian army. The French and British governments had been attempting to pressure Sonnino into releasing Yugoslav prisoners of war for this army since December 1917 but without success.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Namier memorandum, 15 May 1918, Hardinge to Drummond, 16 May 1918, F.O. 371-4363-PID137. Drummond to Dmowski, 17 May 1918, F.O. 800-329.

⁷⁷ Sargent to Oliphant, 16 April 1918, Tyrrell to Sargent, 13 May 1918, F.O. 371-3281-74529. Rumbold to Balfour, 17 May 1918, F.O. 371-3278-92307. Rumbold to Balfour, 19 April 1918, F.O. 371-3278-74361.

⁷⁸ See above, p.205.

As an alternative the Entente began to recruit Yugoslavs in Canada, but this was an inadequate and unfeasible solution to the problem of replacements for the Serbian army.⁷⁹ Allied tonnage was so limited that if Yugoslav recruits were shipped from Canada, they would displace American troops destined for France.⁸⁰ Since there were an estimated 18,000 potential Yugoslav volunteers in Italian prison camps, the Allied governments continued to press the Italian government for their release. The Italian decision to form Czechoslovak units gave some reason to hope that Sonnino would adopt a more reasonable attitude on the question of Yugoslav recruits.⁸¹ On April 5, 1918, at the height of the Ludendorff offensive, the foreign office instructed Rodd:

Present situation of all the Allies is so critical that political considerations cannot be allowed to override military necessities, and you should therefore, as soon as your French colleague receives similar instructions, urgently press the Italian Government to reconsider their previous attitude.⁸²

The Italian government finally conceded to Allied demands only after Pichon raised the issue of replacements for the Serbian army at a meeting of the supreme war council on July 4, 1918.⁸³ It agreed to release Orthodox Serbs for the Serbian army but refused to release Croats and Slovenes whom it now planned to form into a separate Yugoslav unit. The

⁷⁹ Hardinge to Maurice, 22 April 1918, Maurice to Hardinge, 23 April 1918, F.O. to treasury, 9 May 1918, F.O. 371-3144-79787. Devonshire to Long, 5 July 1918, F.O. 371-3144-13129.

⁸⁰ Ministry of shipping to W.O., 8 May 1918, F.O. 371-3323-84358.

⁸¹ F.O. to Rodd, 8 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-168047. Rodd to Balfour, 10 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-49674. Cubitt to F.O., 2 April 1918, Nicolson minute, 3 April 1918, F.O. 371-3149-58584.

⁸² F.O. to Rodd, 5 April 1918, F.O. 371-3149-58584. Bertie to F.O., 9 April 1918, F.O. 371-3149-63085.

⁸³ F.O. to Rodd, 22 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-110595. F.O. to Rodd, 7 July 1918, F.O. 371-3149-116401. Supreme war council, 4 July 1918, Cab. 28-14. F.O. to Rodd, 19 July 1918, F.O. 371-3228-124860.

Yugoslavs were not averse to the proposal to form a separate army, as it would increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis the Serbian government, but the British government was dissatisfied because, since most of the prisoners were Croats or Slovenes, it would leave the problem of replacements for the Serbian army unsolved.⁸⁴ As Macdonogh pointed out, the intention was obvious: '... Sonnino's suggestion would, if put into practice, defeat the aim of Jugo-Slav unity by separating Serbs from Croats and Slovenes.'⁸⁵ In August 1918 the Italians released four hundred Orthodox Serbs, but after that Sonnino would make no further concessions and the war ended before the Italian government was able to form a Yugoslav army.⁸⁶ If such an army had been created, the Yugoslavs might have been able to wring political concessions from the Allied governments, but without it they were never very successful at converting their services to the Entente to their own political advantage. Their only influence stemmed from their importance in anti-Habsburg propaganda.

The government encountered fewer difficulties in the more extensive use of the Czechoslovaks but found that this entailed, at the insistence of the émigrés, irrevocable steps towards national self-determination. The more the Allies used the Czechs, the more they became committed to the cause of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovaks were in a more powerful position than the Yugoslavs because they represented an army of an estimated 100,000 men. In addition to the army in France, there were about 70,000

⁸⁴ Nicolson minute, 22 July 1918, F.O. 371-3149-127287. F.O. to Rodd, 8 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-168047.

⁸⁵ Macdonogh to F.O., 18 July 1918, F.O. 371-3228-124860.

⁸⁶ Graham minute, Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-174605.

troops in Russia and about 12,000 in the army being formed in Italy.⁸⁷ Difficulties arose between the Allies over the fate of the Czechoslovak army in Russia because the French government wanted it transferred to France under French command while the British government preferred to leave it in Russia.⁸⁸ The French plan was fraught with difficulties because of the shortage in Allied tonnage and was obviously motivated by political rather than military considerations because tonnage allotted to the Czech army would have to be diverted from the transport of American troops to France.⁸⁹ Although Balfour thought the French plan absurd, the British government reluctantly agreed, on May 2, 1918, at a meeting of the supreme war council at Abbeville, to transport the Czechoslovak army to France.⁹⁰ Despite its acceptance of the French plan, the British government was still extremely dissatisfied and sought to circumvent it by appealing to the émigrés to leave their forces in Russia.⁹¹

At the beginning of May 1918 the British government was already involved in negotiations with the Czechs arising from the formation in Italy and France of Czechoslovak armies under the political jurisdiction of the Czechoslovak National Council.⁹² On April 24, 1918, Colonel Milan Štefanik, the Slovak member of the National Council, asked the British

⁸⁷ Granville Barker memorandum, 30 April 1918, F.O. 371-3135-82126. Stanhope, 'The Czecho-Slovak Movement', 22 April 1918, F.O. 371-3443-80235-GT 4414.

⁸⁸ Spiers to W.O., 31 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3323-57780. F.O. to Lockhart, 20 April 1918, F.O. 371-3323-68874.

⁸⁹ Macdonogh to F.O., 30 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3323-57780. Ministry of shipping to F.O., 8 May 1918, F.O. 371-3323-84358.

⁹⁰ Supreme war council, 2 May 1918, F.O. 371-3323-79525.

⁹¹ Smuts-Milner memorandum, 'Intervention in Russia', 11 May 1918, Cab.23-6. Amery memorandum, 14 May 1918, Milner Mss. 118.

⁹² Spiers memorandum, 30 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3149-58590.

government to recognize the Czechoslovak army under the political authority of the National Council, to give it all possible moral and material assistance and to appoint a military attaché to its headquarters.⁹³ Since the Italian government had just signed a similar agreement, made necessary by its use of Czech forces, an Anglo-Czech convention as suggested by Štefanik would merely bring British policy in line with the position adopted by the other Allies.⁹⁴ Štefanik's proposal was supported by the war office and strongly endorsed by the chief of the British military mission in Italy, General Charles Delmé-Radcliffe, who, under the influence of Wickham Steed, had become a supporter of the nationalities.⁹⁵ On April 4, 1918, Delmé-Radcliffe had suggested the creation of provisional governments for each of the nationalities because they would facilitate both the use of Czechoslovak troops and the campaign of offensive propaganda directed against the Habsburg army.⁹⁶ The foreign office saw no objection to Štefanik's proposals and did not seem to consider them particularly significant.⁹⁷ But the issue arose just when it was seeking some way to circumvent the Abbeville agreement on the fate of the army in Russia.

At a meeting arranged by Steed on May 10, 1918, Beneš followed up Štefanik's initiative by presenting Balfour with proposals that the British government should

⁹³ Delmé-Radcliffe to C.I.G.S., 24 April 1918, F.O. 371-3135-75654.

⁹⁴ Redd to F.O., 8 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-82446.

⁹⁵ Macdonogh to Hardinge, 26 April 1918, F.O. 371-3135-75654. Delmé-Radcliffe to Macdonogh, 4 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-81475. Steed report, 27 May 1918, Steed Mss.

⁹⁶ Delmé-Radcliffe to C.I.G.S., 4 April 1918, Milner Mss. 118. Delmé-Radcliffe memorandum, 4 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-81475.

⁹⁷ Cecil, Hardinge and Balfour minutes, 26 April 1918, F.O. 371-3135-75645.

1) ... reserve to the National Council the same treatment as has been accorded to it by the French, Italian and the ancient Russian Governments, that is to say ... in so far as its action concerns British interests and territory; 2) ... take account of the existence of a national Czecho-Slovak Army, ... and to give adhesion to its constitution both from the political and military point of view: a) by recognising the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the supreme political organ not only of the Czecho-Slovak movement for independence, but also of the national Czecho-Slovak Army; b) ... by appointing an officer of liaison or a military attaché ... 3) ... give to the National Council certain political rights concerning civil affairs of our compatriots, similar to those already accorded to the Polish National Committee. ⁹⁸

Nothing was decided at this meeting, but Beneš records that Balfour expressed the desire to retain the Czechoslovak army in Russia.⁹⁹ In giving the council consular privileges, these proposals were more comprehensive than Štefanik's, and, in the wording of the second point proposing the recognition of the council 'as the supreme political organ not only of the Czecho-Slovak movement', they might be politically more significant. This wording could be interpreted as meaning more than the recognition of the council as the political authority of the army and the representative of Czechoslovak interests in Allied countries.

On May 17, 1918, the war cabinet again discussed the question of the Czechoslovak army and instructed Cecil to ascertain from Beneš whether the National Council would agree to its retention in Russia.¹⁰⁰ On May 18, 1918, Cecil explained to Beneš the reasons for wanting to keep the army in Russia, and, according to Cecil, Beneš stated that the army would obey the orders of the National Council. He added, however, that if the army was asked to remain in Russia:

⁹⁸ Steed report, 27 May 1918, Steed Mss. Beneš to Balfour, 11 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-85869.

⁹⁹ Beneš, Memoirs, pp. 373-4.

¹⁰⁰ War cabinet 413, 17 May 1918, Cab. 23-6.

the Allied Governments should take an opportunity of recognising in public the Cecho-Slovak [sic] movement and their National Council. He did not ask that any promises should be made, but he did wish that they should be acknowledged as a nationality with just claims to independence. 101

The foreign office favoured Benes' proposals and wanted immediate action because a solution to the problem of using the Czechoslovaks in Russia could not be postponed.¹⁰² There was little discussion of the details of these proposals because they did not seem to involve any commitment for the government. As Cecil noted: 'The Czechs do not desire any promise or guarantee which they recognize to be useless.'¹⁰³ Namier alone commented extensively on the proposals, and he argued that since the other Allies had already made similar agreements with the Czechoslovaks, these proposals, which might otherwise have been significant, were not particularly important.¹⁰⁴ On May 27, 1918, at a meeting of the war cabinet, Cecil proposed addressing a letter to the Czechoslovak National Council which 'while giving them the measure of recognition desired, would not commit the Government to any increased War obligations.'¹⁰⁵ With the cabinet's assent Balfour wrote to Benes on June 3, 1918, that the government:

will be glad to give the same recognition to this movement as has been granted by the Governments of France and Italy. His Majesty's Government will thus be prepared to recognise the Cecho-Slovak National Council as the supreme organ of the Cecho-Slovak movement in Allied countries, and they will also be prepared to recognise the Cecho-Slovak Army as an organised unit operating in the Allied cause and to attach thereto a British liaison officer as soon as the need may arise. His Majesty's Government will at the same time

101 Cecil memorandum, 18 May 1918, F.O. 371-3443-89880.

102 Nicolson, Oliphant and Clerk minutes, 20 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-89425.

103 Cecil minute, 22 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-90542.

104 Namier memorandum, 18 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-89425.

105 War cabinet 418, 27 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-89425. Cecil memorandum, 25 May 1918, Cab. 25-52-GT 4647.

be prepared to accord to the National Council political rights concerning the civil affairs of Czecho-Slovaks similar to those already accorded to the Polish National Committee. 106

It is interesting to note that in condensing and revising Beneš's original proposals Cecil eliminated the clause which might have been interpreted as recognition of the council as the supreme political organ of the Czechoslovak movement in all countries. Before 1918 the Czechoslovaks had had the least success among the émigrés in gaining political recognition from the Allied governments. But by June 1918, because of the formation of Czechoslovak armies, they gained the success that eluded the Yugoslvas and almost equalled the success of the Polish National Committee. The foreign office explained its decision by saying:

we have been obliged to take this action in view not only of active co-operation being afforded to Czecho-Slovaks on Italian and Western Fronts, but also of the fact that there are some 50,000 Czecho-Slovaks in Russia composed partly of prisoners and deserters, whom we have every hope of organizing into an effective force to combat the enemy either in the Eastern or Western theatre of war.107

It is doubtful whether the issue of the army in Russia was decisive in prompting the government to recognize the Czechoslovaks. Since the foreign office did not exhibit at any time during the negotiations the slightest opposition to such recognition, the government probably would have eventually followed the example of France and Italy regardless of the situation in Russia. But this situation probably explains the timing of this recognition. It was hardly a coincidence that Cecil raised the issue in the cabinet and that it agreed to recognition on the day prior to an Anglo-French conference in London at which the fate of the army in

106 Balfour to Beneš, 3 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-89425. H.O. 45-10761-269578. D.M.I. to F.O., 21 May 1918, F.O. 371-3218-90995.

107 F.O. to Reading, 5 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-89425.

Russia was to be discussed. At that conference the British representatives tried to use Beneš' assent to the maintenance of the army in Russia in order to convince the French government to alter its decision to transfer the army to France.¹⁰⁸ Although the French representatives adamantly refused to alter the Abbeville agreement, the fate of this Czechoslovak army was no longer at the disposal of the Allies. On May 25, 1918, it came into conflict with the Bolsheviks making its evacuation from Russia difficult if not impossible.¹⁰⁹

By May 1918 the government was willing to give general recognition to the aspirations of the subject nationalities. The Polish National Committee, with the support of the American and French governments, had been seeking an Allied declaration on Poland since the autumn of 1917.¹¹⁰ Pašić, obviously worried about the danger of a peace with Austria-Hungary at the expense of Serbia, had sought reassurances about Britain's intentions on the South Slav question.¹¹¹ On May 18, 1918, Beneš had requested public recognition of the Czechoslovaks as a nationality with just claims to independence.¹¹² These requests had been vigorously but unsuccessfully supported by the British military representatives in Italy and by Crewe House whose campaign to disrupt the Habsburg monarchy necessitated a forthright statement by the British government in support of national

¹⁰⁸ Cecil to Clemenceau, 18 May 1918, F.O. 371-3443-89881. Anglo-French conference, 28 May 1918, F.O. 371-3334-115535.

¹⁰⁹ Lockhart to F.O., 23 May 1918, F.O. 371-3323-95495. Bradley, Intervention, p.91.

¹¹⁰ See above, pp. 262-67.

¹¹¹ Des Graz to F.O., 7 Mar. 1918, F.O. to Des Graz, 11 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3154-44197. Balfour to Page, 20 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3154-48660. Troubridge to Milner, 30 Mar. 1918, W.O. 32-5130. Graham memorandum, 2 April 1918, F.O. 371-3440-60266.

¹¹² See above, p. 299.

self-determination.¹¹³ British resistance to such declarations, based primarily on the desire for a separate peace, would have been important had it prevented the other Allies from recognizing the aspirations of the subject nationalities. But, on January 9, 1918, Wilson announced, as one of his fourteen points, that:

An independent Polish State should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant. ¹¹⁴

As hope for a separate peace faded, the foreign office began to consider a similar declaration, and on March 8, 1918, it instructed its representative in Rumania to inform Polish émigrés, in reference to the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, 'of the determination of His Majesty's Government to support all Polish attempts to obtain union and independence for Poland.'¹¹⁵ Despite the government's willingness to consider stronger declarations on the subject nationalities, however, it was still unprepared to undertake commitments. When Pichon, at an Anglo-French conference on March 28, 1918, proposed the recognition of Polish and Bohemian independence, Lloyd George still insisted that the Allies avoid pledges that might be unredeemable: 'We would try to free them, but we could not say that the independence of Bohemia and Poland was one of our war aims.'¹¹⁶

The issue was not considered again by the Allies until the supreme war council met in June 1918, and, by this time, if any opposition to such

¹¹³ Steed to Lloyd George, 30 May 1918, Lloyd George Ms. F41-8-15.

¹¹⁴ Dickinson, Documents, p.116.

¹¹⁵ Drummond to Balfour, 7 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-43908. Drummond to Tygodnik Polski, 7 Mar. 1918, F.O. 800-210. F.O. to Barclay, 8 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-41169.

¹¹⁶ Anglo-French conference, 28 Mar. 1918, Cab. 28-3.

declarations existed within the British government, it remained passive. On May 21, 1918, the foreign office had informed Derby that: 'policy of trying to detach Austria from Germany must be abandoned as both inopportune and impracticable.... We think that best plan is to give all possible support to oppressed nationalities',¹¹⁷ The American government even increased the pressure on the Allies to make a declaration by announcing, on May 30, 1918, its earnest sympathy for the freedom of the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs.¹¹⁸ On June 3, 1918, the supreme war council declared that:

- 1) The creation of a united and independent Polish State with free access to the sea constitutes one of the conditions of a solid and just peace, and of the rule of right in Europe.
- 2) The Allied Governments have noted with pleasure the declaration made by the Secretary of State of the United States Government and desire to associate themselves in an expression of earnest sympathy for the nationalistic aspirations towards freedom of the Czecho-Slovak and Yugo-Slav peoples.¹¹⁹

Among the émigrés, only the Poles found the declaration satisfactory. Although weaker than Wilson's thirteenth point, it did contain the phrase 'free access to the sea', considered of the greatest importance by Polish émigrés. But, contrary to Polish expectations, the declaration was carefully worded, as in the past, to avoid any specific pledge.¹²⁰ The real significance of the declaration, however, was that it was interpreted by the British government as a limited commitment to the Polish cause. On July 2, 1918, Balfour wrote to Rumbold: 'This declaration should place beyond doubt once and for all the decision of the Allied Governments to see Poland's national aspirations fully satisfied, so far as lies within

¹¹⁷ Reading to F.O., 30 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-96610.

¹¹⁸ F.O. to Derby, 21 May 1918 F.O. 371-3135-89828.

¹¹⁹ Supreme war council, 3 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-101920.

¹²⁰ Balfour memorandum, 11 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3277-46350. Sobanski to Gregory, 15 Mar. 1918, F.O. 371-3278-49693.

their power, ...¹²¹ In the past, when issuing similar declarations on the Polish issue, the government had always interpreted them so as to minimize their significance. The Versailles declaration was the government's most important statement during the war on the future of Poland precisely because it interpreted the declaration as a commitment to work for Polish independence so far as it lay in its power. It was also the government's last significant act on the Polish issue prior to the armistice.

After this declaration the P.I.D. - Tyrrell, Namier and Headlam - intensified its efforts to reorient Britain's Polish policy by attacking the National Democrats and by attempting to rehabilitate Zaleski and the Polish Information Committee.¹²² The P.I.D. argued that the charges of being corrupt and pro-German, levelled against Zaleski and his colleagues by the National Democrats, were totally unfounded.¹²³ Although these charges had been accepted by the foreign office and military intelligence, the P.I.D. was supported by naval intelligence which in June 1918 completed the report on Polish politics requested by Balfour in February 1918.¹²⁴ The report maintained that these charges were merely unscrupulous libels perpetrated by the National Democrats and concluded, after examining this type of conduct in Polish politics, that 'it is difficult sometimes for the casual observer to avoid the uneasy suspicion that the whole of Polish politics is incredibly crude and raw, and has a general character of brutality and stupidity which make all parallels and analogies hopelessly

¹²¹ Balfour to Rumbold, 2 July 1918, F.O. 371-3278-92307.

¹²² Tyrrell to Hardinge, 22 July 1918, F.O. 371-3281-135128.

¹²³ Headlam memorandum, 25 June 1918, F.O. 371-3281-135128. Headlam to Tyrrell, 22 July 1918, F.O. 371-3281-135129.

¹²⁴ See above, pp. 292-93.

misleading.' The report also pointed out, contrary to the belief of the foreign office, that the National Democrats in Poland were co-operating with the enemy and that the Socialists were the only group in Polish politics unalterably opposed to the Central powers.¹²⁵

On May 31, 1918, Zaleski informed the foreign office that he had been appointed the representative in London of the Polish provisional government in Warsaw and requested the initiation of informal discussions between the two governments.¹²⁶ Although the foreign office opposed this request, Tyrrell was able, by arguing that it was necessary to expand the sources of information on Polish politics, to convince Balfour, Hardinge and Clerk to allow at least informal contact with Zaleski.¹²⁷ On July 26, 1918, the foreign office even agreed, at Tyrrell's instigation, to allow Zaleski to travel to Switzerland where it was expected he would have greater access to information on developments in Poland.¹²⁸ It was agreed, however, that he would travel only as a private citizen and not as a recognized representative of the Polish provisional government.¹²⁹ This decision marked a change in the official attitude towards the various Polish factions, and it was significant that Clerk, who had previously accepted the views of Drummond and Gregory, was now sufficiently satisfied that Zaleski was a

¹²⁵ Dickson, 'Present Condition of Political Parties in the Kingdom of Poland', 25 June 1918, F.O. 371-3279-169676.

¹²⁶ Zaleski to Balfour, 31 May 1918, F.O. 371-3278-98133. Rumbold to Balfour, 12 June 1918, F.O. 371-3278-108501.

¹²⁷ Gregory and Hardinge minutes, 12 June 1918, F.O. 371-3278-108501. Clerk and Hardinge minutes, 7 June 1918, F.O. 371-3278-98133. Tyrrell to Hardinge, 22 July 1918, F.O. 371-3281-135128.

¹²⁸ Tyrrell to Hardinge, 25 July 1918, Balfour minute, 26 July 1918, F.O. 371-3281-135129.

¹²⁹ Clerk minutes, 23 July 1918, 26 July 1918, F.O. 371-3281-135129.

supporter of the Entente that he was willing to sanction official contact with him. In September 1918 the foreign office also lifted the embargo on the export of Zaleski's Polish Review which had been previously banned for attacks on the Polish National Committee.¹³⁰

As the war approached its end, the influence of the P.I.D. increased, and these measures, carried out at its instigation, were symptomatic of the decline of the Polish National Committee. Since that committee had achieved its predominant position in Anglo-Polish relations for strategic not political reasons, these measures indicated that its influence might not outlast the end of the conflict. The trend of events in Poland also worked against the committee because, as the foreign office gradually realized, there was a danger that when German authority in Poland collapsed, the vacuum would be filled not by the Polish National Committee but by those opponents of the National Democrats with whom the government had no contact except through Zaleski. Despite the views of the P.I.D. which were shared, to some extent, by Cecil and Clerk and despite the danger that it might be supporting the wrong faction, the foreign office would not abandon the Polish National Committee.¹³¹ As long as hostilities continued and as long as the Polish army fought in France, the original reasons for recognizing the committee remained valid. The foreign office could not replace the faction responsible for the creation of the army, which by November 1918 contained 100,000 men, with another faction known to be conducting relations with the Central powers.¹³² In the uncertainties of Polish

¹³⁰ D.M.I. to F.O., 20 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3281-145937. D.M.I. to F.O., 18 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3281-159019.

¹³¹ Balfour to Sobanski, 12 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-167666.

¹³² Rumbold to F.O., 23 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3278-146017. Clerk minutes, 26 Aug. 1918, 4 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3278-148264. S.R. Pliska, 'The Polish-American Army, 1917-1921', Polish Review, vol.X, No.3, p.56.

politics it seemed of questionable value to abandon one faction for another. On September 4, 1918, Clerk wrote: 'I am quite clear that we must not be drawn into any negotiations direct or indirect with the so-called Polish Government. If we were we should risk the sympathies of all other Polish opinion.'¹³³

To avoid being caught at the end of the war backing the wrong horse, the foreign office sought to expand the Polish National Committee to make it more representative of Polish opinion.¹³⁴ Although a committee representing all Polish parties seemed to be an ideal solution, the nature of Polish politics, as the foreign office quickly learned, made it impossible. On August 15, 1918, Drummond wrote: 'I naturally agree that a Polish Committee representative of all Polish parties would be most advantageous. Unfortunately I fear that it is not practicable to constitute such a committee under present conditions. We must I think therefore make the best of what material we have.'¹³⁵ Despite reservations, the foreign office did not abandon the Polish National Committee but continued, as long as the war lasted, its attempts to make it more representative.¹³⁶ For that reason, even though Gregory admitted that the committee 'will soon have outrun its utility,' the Polish National Committee was able to maintain its predominant position until the armistice.¹³⁷ It still received

¹³³ Clerk minute, 4 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3278-148264.

¹³⁴ Cecil minutes, 6 Aug. 1918, 18 Aug. 1918, Drummond minute, 18 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-148973.

¹³⁵ Drummond minute, 15 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3280-148973. Namier memorandum, 9 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3278-150054. Rumbold to Balfour, 3 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3279-170725.

¹³⁶ Acton to F.O., 25 Oct. 1918, Drummond minute, 25 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3279-177312. Cecil memorandum, 26 Oct. 1918, Cecil Mss. 51094.

¹³⁷ Gregory minute, 14 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3279-170725.

its monthly payment from the British government for October 1918, and at the armistice it was the only Polish organization recognized by the government.¹³⁸

The British position on the Polish issue at the time of the armistice had been determined by the Versailles declaration of June 3, 1918. The government was not committed to the Polish National Committee which had only been recognized as an official Polish organization and not as a provisional government. Although the government considered itself committed, in a limited sense, to the independence of Poland, this commitment did not have the legal force of, for example, British obligations to Italy under the treaty of London. The government also had no specific territorial commitments to the future Polish state for even its endorsement of Polish access to the sea only committed it, by its own interpretation, to internationalization of the Vistula.¹³⁹ The government had not even decided on what areas should be included in the Polish state, although it was determined that Poland should only comprise those areas inhabited by Poles. At a meeting of the supreme war council on November 2, 1918, Balfour replied with some annoyance to a suggestion by Pichon that Poland be given the frontiers of 1772: 'that he had listened to this proposal with some anxiety. The suggestion was that the Poland of 1772 should be that of 1919. That was not what we had undertaken to bring about.'¹⁴⁰

The Poles had fared better in the Versailles declaration than the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs who, expecting more, were left extremely dissatisfied. Balfour later explained to Northcliffe that the British and

¹³⁸ Treasury to F.O., 19 Oct. 1918, T12-41.

¹³⁹ War cabinet 457, 13 Aug. 1918, Cab. 23-7.

¹⁴⁰ Supreme war council, 2 Nov. 1918, Milner Mss. 124-2.

French had wanted to issue a stronger declaration but had been opposed by the Italian government. Sonnino did not object to a stronger declaration on the Czechoslovak issue, but, since it was generally agreed that both nationalities had to be included in the same declaration, the Czechoslovaks suffered because of Italian opposition to the Yugoslavs.¹⁴¹ Balfour justified the inadequacy of this declaration by saying that while the French and British governments were willing to make stronger declarations, they were also unwilling to advertise a 'fundamental difference of opinion between Italy on the one side and France and England on the other about an important point of policy.'¹⁴² In order to overcome the limitations imposed upon them at Versailles by the attitude of the Italian government, however, the French and British governments had reserved for themselves the right to make supplementary declarations on the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks.

No sooner had the declaration been published than the foreign office began to receive indications of the amount of dissatisfaction it created among the supporters of national self-determination. On behalf of Crewe House Northcliffe wrote to Balfour:

May I therefore impress upon you very earnestly the expediency of making some public statement without delay in such terms as may reassure our Czecho-Slovak and Yugo-Slav friends and encourage them to persevere in the valuable work they have been doing, and are disposed increasingly to do.¹⁴³

In response to Northcliffe's appeal, Balfour asked Beneš to publish the letter of recognition addressed to him on June 3, 1918, and, on June 11,

¹⁴¹ Drummond minute, 3 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-101920. Delmé-Radcliffe to D.M.I., 10 June 1918, F.O. 371-3474-105849. Reading to F.O., 12 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-105559. Hardinge to Rodd, 17 June 1918, Hardinge Mss. 38.

¹⁴² Balfour to Northcliffe, 8 June 1918, F.O. 800-212.

¹⁴³ Northcliffe to Balfour, 6 June 1918, F.O. 800-212.

1918, Cecil stated in the house of commons:

It will be for the liberated Czechs-Slovak and Yugo-Slav peoples themselves to determine their future status. His Majesty's Government fully recognise the many proofs given by these races of intense national feeling, and cordially acknowledge the assistance which the national troops of the Czecho-Slovaks and Yugo-Slavs are rendering to the Allied cause. 144

Despite this statement, the Yugoslavs and their supporters remained dissatisfied as is evidenced by the number of representations made by them and on their behalf to the foreign office appealing for a stronger declaration on the Yugoslav question.¹⁴⁵ On June 21, 1918, during the Austrian Piave offensive, Delmé-Radcliffe informed Macdonogh:

It is essential that strong action by the Allied Governments to bring all the oppressed nationalities of Austria more completely over to our side should be delayed no longer. The importance of such a result as affecting the military situation cannot be exaggerated. 146

The foreign office clearly recognized the value and necessity of a further declaration but had to find a suitable opportunity and formula which would not upset the Italian government.¹⁴⁷ Sonnino had justified his opposition to Yugoslav aspirations by claiming that, since the majority of South Slavs wanted only autonomy within the Habsburg monarchy, a declaration in favour of a Yugoslav state would only alienate them and inspire them to greater efforts on behalf of the Central powers.¹⁴⁸ The

144 Parliamentary Debates, Commons, vol. 106, col. 2022, 11 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-107939.

145 Reading to F.O., 10 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-103493. Balfour to Des Graz, 13 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-107108. Jovanović to Balfour, 12 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-106348. Coleville Barclay to Balfour, 4 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-111985. Yugoslav Workman's Ass. to Balfour, 27 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-115053. Hohler to Balfour, 12 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-117008.

146 Delmé-Radcliffe to Macdonogh, 21 June 1918, W.O. 106-824.

147 Hardinge minute, 12 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-105559. Nicolson minute, 14 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-106348. Oliphant and Graham minutes, 29 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-115053.

148 Balfour to Northcliffe, 8 June 1918, F.O. 800-212.

foreign office doubted this interpretation of the Yugoslav situation, as it contradicted most of its previous information, but, before taking further action, it requested military intelligence to undertake a thorough re-analysis of the whole situation. On June 17, 1918, Hardinge wrote to Rodd:

Bye the bye Baron Sonnino has really been extremely tiresome over the Yugo-Slav question. We are being bombarded by the Serbians and Yugo-Slav committees protesting against the weakness of our Declaration and comparing it with that made regarding the Poles. I understand that Sonnino maintains that the Yugo-Slavs do not want independence but merely autonomy, and that to declare for independence would be to throw the bulk of the Yugo-Slavs into the arms of Austria. Our information is totally opposed to this, and we are working it out. 149

The report, completed by military intelligence on June 28, 1918, repudiated Sonnino's interpretation and, as the foreign office expected, supported the Yugoslav claims.¹⁵⁰ The P.I.D. agreed with the report and the foreign office accepted it as an accurate and unbiased analysis of the Italian-Yugoslav problem.¹⁵¹ The opportunity and even necessity of a further act of recognition of Yugoslav aspirations arose in July 1918 when Balfour was invited to address a meeting of the Serbian (Yugo-Slav) National War Aims Committee in Great Britain.¹⁵² Drummond and Hardinge were somewhat nervous because of the danger that by his attendance Balfour might be associated with extremist remarks, but, as Nicolson pointed out, the invitation could not be refused without seriously offending the already sensitive Yugoslavs: 'Abstention in the circumstances would assuredly not

149 Hardinge to Rodd, 17 June 1918, Hardinge Mss. 38.

150 Temperley (M.I. 2e) memorandum, 28 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-116831.

151 Tyrrell to Hardinge, 28 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-116831. P.I.D. memorandum, 3 July 1918, Cab. 24-57-GT 5028. Namier memorandum, 26 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-111985. Drummond to Rodd, 9 July 1918, F.O. 800-385.

152 Oman to Drummond, 26 June 1918, F.O. 371-3157-114762. Jovanović to Balfour, 6 July 1918, F.O. 371-3157-120332.

be attributed to simple considerations of tact and caution, but would be taken as implying some mysterious reorientation of policy.¹⁵³ Following Nicolson's advice, Balfour attended the meeting at Mansion House on July 25, 1918, and associated himself with its declared aim of 'independence and unity of all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in a single State.'¹⁵⁴

Although no one could have realized it at the time, this was the government's last act of recognition of Yugoslav aspirations during the war. Following the Inter-Allied Conference on Propaganda in Enemy Countries in August 1918, Crewe House requested another Allied declaration recognizing 'the establishment of a free and united Yugoslav State, embracing the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as one of the conditions of a just and lasting peace and of the rule of right in Europe.'¹⁵⁵ The foreign office readily accepted this suggestion on condition that it could be negotiated with the other Allied governments.¹⁵⁶ Although it anticipated Italian opposition to this proposal, on September 25, 1918, the Italian government, aware of the importance of Yugoslav propaganda in its forthcoming offensive against the Austrian army at Vittorio Veneto, issued a declaration in similar terms recognizing the justice of Yugoslav aspirations for an independent state.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Nicolson minute, 10 July, 1918, F.O. 371-3157-120332. Drummond and Hardinge minutes, 26 June 1918, F.O. 371-3157-714762.

¹⁵⁴ Balfour minute, 25 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-130170. Steed, Thirty Years, p.230. The Times, 26 July 1918.

¹⁵⁵ 'Propaganda in Enemy Countries: Report of the Policy Committee', 24 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3475-151047. Northcliffe to Lloyd George, 7 Aug. 1918, Lloyd George Ms. F41-8-20.

¹⁵⁶ Balfour memorandum, 13 Sept. 1918, Cab.24-63-GT 5677. War cabinet 482, 3 Oct. 1918, Cab.23-8. Balfour to Montagu, 31 Oct. 1918, F.O.800-207.

¹⁵⁷ Erskine to F.O., 14 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-157243. Borghese to F.O., 20 Sept. 1918, F.O. to Borghese, 20 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-158233. Rodd to Balfour, 25 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-166419.

Even in September 1918 offensive propaganda against Austria-Hungary was still an important aspect of Allied strategy because the Allies did not realize how close the Central powers were to a complete collapse. The Italian declaration gave the British government the opportunity to adopt a more forward policy on the Yugoslav question, but a new obstacle arose from the growing conflict between the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee.

In September 1918 the Yugoslav Committee began to request recognition similar to that accorded to the Czechoslovak and Polish committees.¹⁵⁸ Unlike the others, however, the Yugoslavs could not bargain from a position of strength because there was no Yugoslav army. Yugoslav recruits had not been formed into a national army but had been placed in the Serbian army.¹⁵⁹ The émigrés could request recognition, but they could not demand it. Close relations had been established between the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee by the pact of Corfu in June 1917 which both parties had signed as equals, agreeing to work for a South Slav state under the Karageorgević dynasty. These good relations were in the process of breaking down throughout 1918 as each party accused the other of violating the pact.¹⁶⁰ In essence the conflict developed because the Yugoslav Committee wanted an independent position so that it could negotiate with the Serbian government on behalf of the Austrian South Slavs, while Pašić and his government, tolerating no rivals, claimed sole leadership of the South

¹⁵⁸ Cecil to Des Graz, 26 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-147786. Cecil to Balfour, 9 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-154848.

¹⁵⁹ Cecil to Balfour, 9 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-154848.

¹⁶⁰ Steed, Thirty Years, pp.233-39. Lederer, Yugoslavia, p.39. Ostović, Yugoslavia, pp.83-89. See above, pp.213-14.

Slavs.¹⁶¹ By October 1918 the British government was willing to recognize a South Slav authority and to give greater endorsement to South Slav aspirations, but it insisted on the maintenance of the pact of Corfu in which the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee were equals.¹⁶² In interviews with Trumbić and Pašić Balfour made it quite clear that the government would not recognize either claim to sole leadership of the cause and would only recognize an authority which could speak for all South Slavs.¹⁶³ In fact, the foreign office wanted Pašić to establish a coalition government including members of the Yugoslav Committee.¹⁶⁴ The inability of the Yugoslavs and Serbians to agree, despite the efforts of the foreign office to negotiate a compromise, created a stalemate and prevented the British government from recognizing any South Slav authority. On October 23, 1918, as Austria-Hungary was already beginning to collapse, the foreign office attempted to induce Pašić to compromise by threatening to recognize the Yugoslav Committee, but, before any further action could be taken, the war had ended.¹⁶⁵

The knowledge that Benes was also dissatisfied with the Versailles declaration led the British and French governments to use the occasion of the presentation of colours to the Czechoslovak army in France to give further recognition to Czechoslovak aspirations.¹⁶⁶ On July 1, 1918, the

¹⁶¹ Trumbić memorandum, 7 Oct. 1918, Leeper memorandum, 9 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-169690.

¹⁶² Seton-Watson memorandum, 4 Oct. 1918, Phillips memorandum, 5 Oct. 1918, Drummond to Balfour, 5 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3154-169142.

¹⁶³ Balfour to Des Graz, 9 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-171759.

¹⁶⁴ Graham to Balfour, 17 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-176415.

¹⁶⁵ F.O. to Derby, 23 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-176415.

¹⁶⁶ Drummond minute, 3 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-101920. Pichon to Balfour, 28 June 1918, Hardinge to Balfour, 28 June 1918, Cambon to Hardinge, 29 June 1918, F.O. 371-3135-115851.

president of France declared that:

Le Gouvernement de la République, fidèle aux principes du respect des nationalités et de la libération des peuples opprimés pour lesquels il combat avec ses Alliés, ... et, s'inspirant des sentiments de haut idéal exprimés par M. le Président Wilson considère comme justes et fondées les revendications du peuple Tchéco-Slovaque et déclare qu'il appuiera de toute sa sollicitude les aspirations à l'indépendance pour lesquelles ses soldats combattent dans les rangs Alliés.

At the same time the foreign office published a statement that: 'His Majesty's Government desire fully to associate themselves with the sentiments so admirably expressed in the speech of the President of the Republic.'¹⁶⁷ In the past, the Allies had expressed sympathy for Czechoslovak aspirations, but this was the first statement with which the British government associated itself which expressed support for these aspirations. The statement was subject to interpretation because there was no indication to what degree the British government would support Czechoslovak aims, but, nevertheless, it was the strongest statement yet made in reference to the Czechoslovak cause.

Once the British government realized that a separate peace was impossible and that the war would have to continue until the enemy was defeated, it quickly abandoned the caution that had marked its previous relations with the nationalities and undertook, without opposition or even hesitation, measures which it had previously avoided. Compared to its hesitation over the preceding three years it agreed with almost surprising alacrity to the recognition of the Czechoslovak army, to the Versailles declaration and to the supplementary declarations on the Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks. In July 1918, however, when Masaryk, acting through Benes and Steed, requested British recognition of a Czechoslovak provisional

¹⁶⁷ F.O. to Press Bureau, 1 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-115851.

government, caution reasserted itself.¹⁶⁸

Initially the foreign office, including those officials favourable to the Czechoslovak cause, opposed this unorthodox and far-reaching proposal and was disposed, despite its desire to guarantee Czechoslovak support for the Entente, to show that there were still limits beyond which it would not go. Nicolson had difficulty in conceiving of a provisional government lacking territory over which it exercised at least de facto control and pointed out that recognition of a Czechoslovak provisional government would only offend the Poles and Yugoslavs.¹⁶⁹ Tyrrell and Namier agreed with Nicolson and, while sympathetic to the Czech cause, thought the proposal premature and unnecessary.¹⁷⁰ Hardinge speculated that if such recognition led to a revolution in Bohemia it might be worth consideration, but Balfour ruled that the precedent established in Anglo-Polish relations of not recognizing a provisional government had to be followed in the case of the Czechoslovaks.¹⁷¹ But, when Cecil pointed out to Balfour that recognition of a Czechoslovak government might prevent the Austrians from executing captured Czechoslovak soldiers, a practice they had hitherto followed, Balfour reconsidered:

If recognition would really save Bohemian lives we might well throw logic to the winds and acknowledge the Czecho-Slovaks. But the course will almost certainly be inconvenient from a diplomatic point of view; and unless it is necessary on grounds of humanity I do not recommend it. I shall be a great deal influenced by what Dr. B [Benes] tells you tomorrow. But of course he is a prejudiced witness.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Masaryk to Beneš, 15 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135132. Beneš to Steed, 16 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-127473. Masaryk, State, p.183.

¹⁶⁹ Nicolson minute, 22 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-127473.

¹⁷⁰ Tyrrell minute, 23 July 1918, Namier memorandum, 23 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-127473.

¹⁷¹ Hardinge and Balfour minutes, 24 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-127473.

¹⁷² Drummond and Balfour minutes, 24 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-127473.

In fact the reluctance shown by the foreign office when presented with this proposal was a luxury the government could no longer afford. When he first suggested the proposal to Steed, Beneš commented: 'The position in Siberia gives us the right to do it.'¹⁷³ Irrespective of rights, the situation in Siberia gave the Czechoslovaks the power to make such demands. The outbreak of hostilities between the Czechoslovak army in Russia and the Bolsheviks in May 1918 forced the Allies to abandon temporarily the plan, which the British government had only reluctantly accepted, to transfer this army from Siberia to France. The ultimate destination of this army ceased to be a question of immediate importance because Bolshevik hostility cast doubt on its very survival. Since the British government wanted to use the Czechs as the spearhead of Allied intervention in Siberia, these developments fitted perfectly into its military planning.¹⁷⁴ The previous refusal of the French government to use Czechoslovak troops in Russia had been a nuisance, but the real obstacle to British plans for intervention in Siberia had been the complete refusal of the American government to co-operate. Prior to the outbreak of Czech-Bolshevik hostilities the American government had refused to sanction or participate in any form of intervention, despite the strenuous efforts of the British and French governments to convince Wilson that intervention was a military necessity in order to deny the Central powers control of Siberia and in order to re-establish an eastern front.¹⁷⁵ These arguments failed to move President Wilson, but the outbreak

¹⁷³ Beneš to Steed, 16 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-127473.

¹⁷⁴ Lloyd George to Cecil, 7 June 1918, Cecil Mss. 51076. Lockhart to F.O., 2 June 1918, Milner Mss. 110. Ullman, Anglo-Soviet, pp.153-90. See above, pp. 295-301.

¹⁷⁵ Ullman, Anglo-Soviet, pp.105-106, 196-210.

of Czech-Bolshevik hostilities now enabled the British government to argue that intervention was necessary in order to save the Czechoslovaks from destruction. On June 21, 1918, Balfour wrote to Lord Reading, the new ambassador in Washington: 'The Czechs are our Allies, and we must save them if we can. Their position seems to me to render immediate Allied action on their behalf a matter of urgent necessity.'¹⁷⁶ On July 6, 1918, responding to this argument, Wilson agreed to intervene in Siberia with limited forces for the specific purpose of assisting the Czechoslovaks to disengage from the Bolsheviks and evacuate their troops.¹⁷⁷ But, unlike the Americans, the British were not interested in assisting the Czechs to evacuate Siberia. On June 28, 1918, Balfour had written Bruce Lockhart, the British representative in Russia:

I trust you will take every possible step to encourage the Czechs. In no circumstances should they give up their arms. Nor should they abandon control of Western Siberia which is the key to the Russian position. We have great hopes that intervention will shortly take place with a view to re-establish an Eastern front against the Germans. Czech co-operation should be of the utmost importance to the success of this policy and the Czechs cannot serve the allied cause better than by standing firm.¹⁷⁸

Although the British government found the scope of American plans unsatisfactory, it now hoped that limited involvement, once begun, would lead eventually to unlimited intervention.¹⁷⁹ If the Czechoslovaks continued to fight the Russians, intervention might be prolonged and the Americans might be successfully drawn into committing more troops in Siberia, but if the Czechoslovaks evacuated their forces to eastern Siberia as quickly as possible, the whole policy of intervention might

¹⁷⁶ Balfour to Reading, 21 June 1918, F.O. 371-3324-110145.

¹⁷⁷ Ullman, Anglo-Soviet, p.214.

¹⁷⁸ Balfour to Lockhart, 28 June 1918, F.O. 371-3324-113393.

¹⁷⁹ Ullman, Anglo-Soviet, p.219.

collapse. For that reason, as Lloyd George wrote to Reading: 'The Czechoslovaks are the key to the position.'¹⁸⁰ But at the beginning of July 1918 there was no reason to assume that the Czechoslovaks would stay in Siberia. Until hostilities had broken out with the Bolsheviks, the Czechoslovaks had refused to fight on Russian soil and had consistently expressed their desire to leave Russia.¹⁸¹ In his letter to Steed in which he proposed the recognition of a provisional government, and which Steed passed on to the foreign office, Benes mentioned the possibility of the evacuation of these forces and insisted that at least some, possibly 5,000, had to be transferred to France.¹⁸² In this situation the British government had every reason to give the most serious consideration to Czech demands, and the Czechs found themselves in the unprecedented position of being able to make demands on the government. The strategic importance of their troops in Russia gave the Czechoslovaks power unparalleled among the subject nationalities.

On July 26, 1917, Benes, having come to London for negotiations with the foreign office, submitted a memorandum explaining his case for the recognition of a provisional government. He argued that the National Council could only exercise real authority over the Czechoslovak armies and could only maintain the morale and effectiveness of these forces if it was recognized as a provisional government. The army in Russia would be more obedient and more willing to accept orders from its own provisional government than from any of the Allied governments. Taking advantage of the Siberian situation, Benes pointed out that the Czechoslovak National

¹⁸⁰ Lloyd George to Reading, 18 July 1918, Balfour Mss. 49692.

¹⁸¹ F.O. to Jordan, 17 June 1918, F.O. 371-3323-106087.

¹⁸² Benes to Steed, 16 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-127473.

Council still adhered to the original Allied agreement to transfer the Czechoslovak army to France but was prepared to accept the temporary retention of this army in Siberia until it could be replaced by other Allied forces. The success of these arrangements, however, necessitated in the view of the National Council its recognition as a government with sovereign authority. Benes also argued that recognition would weaken Austria-Hungary and might lead to a revolution in Bohemia. He ended by reviewing Czechoslovak services to the Entente and stated that recognition would lead to even greater efforts.¹⁸³ Although couched in diplomatic language, the message was clear; the price for Czechoslovak services, particularly in Siberia, was the recognition of a provisional government. Instead of explaining the primary reason for his request, that recognition would be of immeasurable value to the Czechoslovaks in their attempts to establish an independent state, Benes had concentrated exclusively on those arguments which he knew from experience would carry weight with British officials.

Following the submission of this memorandum, Benes was interviewed by Cecil and was requested to submit the exact formula of recognition desired by the National Council.¹⁸⁴ In the meantime Drummond, to whom Benes had admitted that recognition would do nothing to save the lives of captured Czech soldiers, suggested that the Czechoslovaks might be satisfied if given all the powers of a government without recognition as such.¹⁸⁵ No one in the foreign office opposed extending greater powers to the National Council, and since it would avoid the legal and diplomatic problems of

¹⁸³ Benes memorandum, 26 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-130680.

¹⁸⁴ Cecil to Balfour, 27 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135132.

¹⁸⁵ Drummond to Balfour, 30 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135132.

recognizing a provisional government, Balfour found this compromise perfectly acceptable.¹⁸⁶

On July 30, 1918, Beneš submitted the exact formula of recognition desired by the National Council, the last sentence of which read: 'His Majesty's Government therefore recognize the sovereignty of the Czecho-Slovak National Council who at present exercise the rights of a Provisional Czecho-Slovak Government.'¹⁸⁷ This sentence was obviously unacceptable to the foreign office, and Balfour only agreed to accept the declaration as a whole after he had replaced it with the statement that: 'Great Britain also recognises the right of the Czecho-Slovak National Council to exercise supreme authority over this Allied and belligerent Army.'¹⁸⁸ When Cecil gave the revised text to Beneš on August 2, 1918, the latter was obviously disappointed that the most significant sentence had been eliminated, but, according to Cecil, he seemed to accept this decision.¹⁸⁹ After consulting Wickham Steed, however, Beneš rejected the text as altered by Balfour because, as he explained, it said even less than Balfour's letter of June 3, 1918. He also submitted documents relating to Czechoslovak relations with Italy and France showing that these countries had already extended more recognition to the National Council than was embodied in the revised declaration.¹⁹⁰ Uninformed of these agreements, Cecil minuted on the letter: 'It seems to me in view of the action of France and Italy - of which I knew nothing till now - that we might well accept the declaration

¹⁸⁶ Balfour minute, 30 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135132.

¹⁸⁷ Beneš to Cecil, 30 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-132422.

¹⁸⁸ Graham, Hardinge and Balfour minutes, 31 July 1918, F.O. 371-3135-132422.

¹⁸⁹ Cecil minute, 2 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135135.

¹⁹⁰ Beneš to Cecil, 3 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135903.

as originally drafted by M. Beneš.¹⁹¹ Had Benes insisted upon his original text it might have been accepted, but instead he suggested an alternative. Following Steed's advice to avoid the word 'sovereignty' and use the word 'trustee', Beneš now suggested that the final sentence should read: 'Great Britain also recognises the right of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, as the supreme organ of the Czecho-Slovak national interests, and as the trustee of the future Czecho-Slovak Government, to exercise supreme authority over this Allied and belligerent Army.'¹⁹²

At a meeting of the war cabinet on August 7, 1918, Sir Henry Wilson, echoing a constant preoccupation of British officials during these negotiations, expressed great concern that the Czechoslovak desire to leave Russia might destroy the plans for intervention.¹⁹³ The cabinet considered the danger serious enough to rule that every effort should be made to keep these forces in Russia, but this concern was, for the moment, unnecessary. Drummond informed Hankey on August 8, 1918, that Masaryk had ordered the Czechoslovak army to remain in Siberia and fight.¹⁹⁴ On August 9, 1918, Cecil informed Beneš that the government accepted the declaration as revised by him on August 2, 1918, so that in its final form it read:

Since the beginning of the war the Czecho-Slovak nation has resisted the common enemy by every means in its power. The Czecho-Slovaks have constituted a considerable Army, fighting on three different battle-fields and attempting, in Russia and Siberia, to arrest the Germanic invasion. In consideration of its efforts to achieve independence, Great Britain regards the Czecho-Slovaks as an Allied Nation, and recognises the unity of the three Czecho-Slovak Armies

¹⁹¹ Cecil minute, 3 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135903.

¹⁹² Beneš, Memoirs, pp.397-410. Steed, Thirty Years, pp.231-233.

¹⁹³ War cabinet 455, 7 August 1918, Cab. 23-7.

¹⁹⁴ Jordan to F.O., 6 Aug. 1918, F.O. 800-200. Drummond to Hankey, 8 Aug. 1918, F.O. 800-200.

as an Allied and belligerent Army waging regular warfare against Austria-Hungary and Germany. Great Britain also recognises the right of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, as the supreme organ of the Czecho-Slovak national interests, and as the present trustee of the future Czecho-Slovak Government, to exercise supreme authority over this Allied and belligerent Army. 195

The government also approved in principle a supplementary convention with the Czechoslovaks which in specific terms gave them the prerogatives of a provisional government. Beneš had submitted a draft of this convention on August 2, 1918, a few days after the foreign office had agreed to grant the Czechs at least the powers of a government.¹⁹⁶ The foreign office did not seriously dispute the clauses of this convention but only approved it in principle because the war office, home office and treasury had to be consulted on those terms which affected them.¹⁹⁷ After extensive revision necessitated by the fact that in some clauses Beneš overreached himself, the convention was signed on September 3, 1918.¹⁹⁸ The British government recognized the National Council's authority over the Czechoslovak army and its right to be represented at Allied conferences which dealt with Czechoslovak affairs. It agreed to extend full consular and diplomatic privileges to the council, such as the issuing of passports and the appointment of diplomatic representatives, and to treat Czechs in Britain as friendly aliens and the members of an Allied nation. Finally the government agreed to participate in future Allied loans to the council and to appoint a

195 Declaration, 9 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135903. Cecil minute, 9 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-138537. Beneš to Cecil, 11 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-139628.

196 Cecil minute, 2 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135135.

197 Drummond to Balfour, 7 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135135.

198 Graham to H.O., 13 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-135135. Waller memoranda, 14-16 Aug. 1918, H.O. 45-10761-269578. F.O. to Beneš, 19 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3135-139628. Beneš to Cecil, 28 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-148362. Inter-department conference, 16 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-142344. Home office circular to chief constables, 20 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-145968.

representative to a financial commission which would supervise the council's budget.¹⁹⁹

Through the declaration and convention which Beneš had negotiated with the government, the Czechoslovak National Council achieved greater success and greater recognition than the Yugoslav Committee or the Polish National Committee were able to achieve at any time during the war. When an official of the home office questioned the Czechoslovak's special status, Cecil replied: 'that it was intended that this should be so as the Czechoslovaks were a more homogeneous body and had done more for the Allied Cause than any of the others.'²⁰⁰ When the Serbian ambassador, on behalf of the Yugoslavs, queried this special treatment of the Czechoslovaks, Cecil informed him: 'that there were considerable differences between the two cases. The Czechoslovaks had a large army in the field, and a National Council, which was recognised by all the Czech forces, and received obedience from them. No such body existed in the case of the Yugo-Slavs.'²⁰¹

The British government was aware that its Czechoslovak policy, as embodied in the declaration and convention, might lead to the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. But, in almost recognizing a Czechoslovak provisional government, the British government had not become a champion of national self-determination or of Czechoslovak independence. The government had accepted certain obligations to the Czechs but had avoided any form of commitment to an independent Czechoslovakia. As Cecil explained: 'Our

¹⁹⁹ 'Agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Czechoslovak National Council', 3 Sept. 1918, H.O. 45-10761-269578 Graham to Beneš, 31 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-148362. Cecil minute, 3 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-152047.

²⁰⁰ Waller memorandum, 16 Aug. 1918, H.O. 45-10761-269588.

²⁰¹ Cecil to Des Graz, 26 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3137-147786.

recognition of the Czechs was very carefully worded and though it would undoubtedly be consistent with the dismemberment of Austria it does not in fact bind us to that solution.'²⁰² The agreements between the British government and the Czechoslovak National Council in the summer of 1918 were perfectly consistent with the previous relations between the government and the subject nationalities and can be explained in similar terms. In their negotiations Beneš and Cecil avoided discussion of any crude bargain, but Beneš made it clear enough that recognition was the price of Czechoslovak co-operation in Siberia. The British acceptance of his demands was not based on a belief in national self-determination or in the ultimate political advantages of Czechoslovak independence but rather on a calculation of the immediate strategic advantages of satisfying the Czechoslovak National Council so that it would continue to co-operate in Siberia. As Cecil admitted: 'we have felt compelled to endorse their claims to independence, and ... we have unquestionably received full value for our endorsement.'²⁰³

These agreements mark the end of the Czechoslovak struggle in Britain during the war for recognition and support of their right to self-determination. When a Czechoslovak provisional government was formed in Paris in October 1918, the British government did not recognize it.²⁰⁴ Before November 11, 1918, it gave no further recognition to the Czechoslovaks and undertook no further commitments to their cause. At the time of the

²⁰² Cecil minute, 2 Sept. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-152102.

²⁰³ Cecil memorandum, 7 Aug. 1918, Cecil Mss. 51105.

²⁰⁴ Derby to F.O., 15 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-173025. Derby to F.O., 20 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-175975. Rodd to F.O., 22 Oct. 1918, F.O. 371-3136-176524.

armistice it was not committed to Czechoslovak independence or to the territorial claims of the Czechoslovak provisional government.

As late as August 1918 the British government expected that the war would continue for another year.²⁰⁵ For that reason it continued almost until the end of the war to base its relations with the émigrés on strategic considerations. There seemed to be no urgent need to solve the problem of Serbian-Yugoslav rivalry, and in the case of the Poles the government, despite considerations of political expediency, would not abandon that faction which was making the greatest contribution to the Entente's war effort. When the Central powers collapsed, events moved so quickly that the government did not have time to alter its relations with the subject nationalities to suit those aims it wished to pursue at the peace conference. In fact, on the subject of national self-determination, the government had not decided exactly what aims it wished to pursue.

The collapse of the enemy cut short the war-time relations between the government and the émigrés before they could be developed to their logical conclusion. Throughout the war, even while it sought a separate peace, the government gradually increased its use of the subject nationalities. Had the war continued into 1919 it is almost certain that this pattern would have continued and would have reached its ultimate conclusion with the British government using the émigrés to promote revolution in Austria-Hungary. Sobanski had suggested such action in November 1917, but at that time a separate peace still seemed possible.²⁰⁶ Disintegration and revolution were the logical results of the propaganda campaign devised

²⁰⁵ War cabinet 457, 13 Aug. 1918, Cab. 23-7. War cabinet 458, 19 Aug. 1918, Cab. 23-7, Fisher diary, 15 Aug. 1918, Fisher Mss. 8.

²⁰⁶ See above, p.271.

by Crewe House and supported by the British military representatives in Italy.²⁰⁷ By April 1918 Beneš was already discussing with British military representatives the Czech preparations for revolution in Bohemia.²⁰⁸ In June 1918 Horodyski informed Drummond that there was considerable unrest in Galicia and suggested that plans be initiated for a joint Polish-Czechoslovak revolution in August.²⁰⁹ The war cabinet, which discussed the proposal on June 11, 1918, was interested but distrusted Horodyski and thought a revolution within Austria-Hungary premature. It did not want a revolution crushed and would only support the plan if it had a reasonable chance of success. As Balfour explained to Derby:

Clearly an insurrection in Poland or in Bohemia, if an isolated event in the war, would be easily suppressed by force and the spirit of the people cowed; we should thus have wasted a valuable potential asset; but if such outbreaks formed part of a larger scheme the Central Powers might be placed in a serious position.²¹⁰

Although it withheld immediate approval, the war cabinet authorized the foreign office to begin preparations so that it could take advantage of the opportune moment when it arose.²¹¹ Because of the natural secrecy surrounding such plans it is impossible to determine what preparations were made and to what extent the government was involved. But such involvement cannot be doubted because on August 23, 1918, Balfour authorized a payment of £4,000 to Horodyski to be used in connection with this work.²¹² On August 27, 1918, Beneš informed Cecil that preparations for a revolution

²⁰⁷ Delmé-Radcliffe memorandum, 19 May 1918, F.O. 371-3135-90542.

²⁰⁸ Stanhope memorandum, 22 April 1918, F.O. 371-3443-80235.

²⁰⁹ Drummond memorandum, 8 June 1918, F.O. 800-329.

²¹⁰ Balfour to Derby, 13 June 1918, Balfour Mss. 49743.

²¹¹ War cabinet 429, 11 June 1918, Cab. 23-14.

²¹² 'Western and General Report', 3 July 1918, Cab. 24-148-75. Drummond memorandum, 23 Aug. 1918, F.O. 800-385. Roskill, Hankey, p.562.

were almost complete and that it would take place either in December 1918 or April 1919 depending on the strategic situation.²¹³

Had the war continued into 1919 and had it been a strategic necessity, there can be little doubt that the Allies would have used revolution as the ultimate weapon against Austria-Hungary. This course of action would have necessitated complete recognition of the subject nationalities and at least limited support for their aspirations. In this situation the government might have been forced to make a formal decision on the fate of Austria-Hungary by giving a general endorsement to the idea of national self-determination. Such developments would have carried the pattern of British relations with the subject nationalities during the war to its ultimate, logical and extreme conclusion. But the collapse of the Central powers, premature in terms of British military planning, cut short this development and left the government in a position which was, to say the least, confused. By November 11, 1918, it had not formally endorsed the general application of the idea of national self-determination and had not decided to destroy Austria-Hungary. Although Balfour suggested, at a meeting of the war cabinet on August 13, 1918, that the dissolution of Austria-Hungary would be the best solution to the problems of eastern Europe, his views were not endorsed by his cabinet colleagues.²¹⁴ But it was obvious to astute observers that British policy, by implication if not by design, would probably result in the destruction of Austria-Hungary. On August 7, 1918, Cecil explained the government's policy in its relations with the émigrés:

²¹³ Cecil memorandum, 27 Aug. 1918, F.O. 371-3133-148060.

²¹⁴ War cabinet 457, 13 Aug. 1918, Cab. 23-7. War cabinet 458, 14 Aug. 1918, Cab. 23-7. War cabinet 459, 15 Aug. 1918, Cab. 23-7. Fisher diary, 15 Aug. 1918, Fisher Mss. 8. Scott diary, 6-8 Aug. 1918, Scott Mss. 50905.

the defeat of Austria is a step towards the defeat of Germany, and all the problems connected with Austrian nationalities should be considered, as far as we are concerned, from that point of view in the first instance. Anything which we can do to weaken Austria by stirring up internal trouble, we must do. ... I do not see what other military policy we can adopt except to hit Austria as hard as we can, hoping either to secure her retirement from the war - in which case the settlement of her relations to the Slav nationalities might be left for settlement at the general peace; or to bring about her destruction as a military force, in which case we should probably have to take our chance as to the result of the complete break up of the Austrian Empire and the setting up of a number of new Slav States. ²¹⁵

The British government had made decisions which would contribute to the destruction of Austria-Hungary, but it was not committed to destruction. Even its relations with the nationality organizations were confused. It had endorsed the creation of Polish and Yugoslav states but in neither case could it find a satisfactory authority to represent these national interests. It had almost recognized a Czechoslovak provisional government but had never endorsed the creation of an independent Czechoslovak state. It had not even decided, and had seldom considered, what territories should be allotted to these states should they be created. In November 1918 the British government faced the prospect of peace negotiations from a position not based on calculations of its long-term political interests in eastern Europe but determined by its military strategy.

By November 11, 1918, British approval of independence for Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia had become irrelevant. On October 28, 1918, Masaryk's followers began to seize power in Bohemia using the revolutionary organization that the British government had sought to promote. On October 29, 1918, the same process began in the Austrian South Slav areas when

²¹⁵ Cecil memorandum, 7 Aug. 1918, Cecil Mss. 51105.

Yugoslav leaders in Zagreb declared the severance of constitutional ties with Austria-Hungary and the incorporation of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia in a Serbian, Croat and Slovene state. On November 10, 1918, Pilsudski was released from prison and began to assume political power in Poland.²¹⁶ Austria-Hungary had ceased to exist making British decisions on its fate now irrelevant. During the peace conference the Allies could determine the territorial settlement in eastern Europe but they had as much power to deny independence to these nationalities as they had to deny existence to the Bolsheviks.

²¹⁶ Zeman, Habsburg Monarchy, pp.221-245.

Conclusion

In August 1914 the British government knew little and cared less about the subject nationalities of eastern Europe. Everyone interested in European affairs knew of the Poles and probably possessed a rudimentary understanding of the Polish problem, but there is no evidence that the foreign office knew anything about the complexities of Polish politics. Serbian politics were better understood, because of the previous Balkan crises, but officials were not well informed about the Austrian South Slavs who were more often referred to as Bosnians, Serbo-Croatians, Croats, Slovenes and Serbs than as South Slavs; the term 'Yugoslav' was a novelty. The Bohemians or Czechs were known but very few had heard of the Slovaks; Czechoslovakia was not yet even a geographical expression. The government knew little of these nationalities because it was not interested in them and because it had no reason to be interested in them.

The British government entered the conflict in 1914 in order to maintain the existing balance of power in western Europe which would be upset either by the violation of Belgian neutrality or by the destruction of France as a great power. The Polish and Czechoslovak problems were totally irrelevant to the July crisis and to the actions of the British government. Although the crisis which precipitated the war stemmed originally from the South Slav problem, this was not a factor in the British decision to enter the conflict. It cannot be said that Britain declared war for Serbia, the cause of national self-determination or the purpose of changing the existing structure of eastern Europe.

Once hostilities began, the British government assumed no specific aims, and showed no interest in a general territorial redistribution in eastern Europe. It could not be indifferent to territorial changes, such as the aggrandizement of one of the great powers, since these changes would affect the balance of power in western Europe. But it was reasonably satisfied with the status quo in eastern Europe and showed no desire to change it. When the leading members of the government - Asquith, Grey and Lloyd George - set out to explain their reasons for declaring war on Germany, they spoke of the 'public law of Europe' but not of national self-determination. The cause they espoused was that of a European system in which problems would be solved by negotiation, not by force. The enemy of that system, which they vowed to destroy, was Prussian militarism not because it suppressed subject nationalities but because, unwilling to compromise in negotiating European problems, it resorted to the use of force. Having declared war to maintain the balance of power in western Europe and fighting the war to crush Prussian militarism, the government was not interested in plans presented by émigrés for a fundamental reorganization of eastern Europe. The government was, however, interested in promoting any group which might assist it in the conduct of the war. For that reason it began to promote relations with the émigrés as soon as they made themselves known.

The home office found the émigrés useful in dealing with enemy aliens; the war office saw them as one way to ease the problem of manpower shortages. Wellington House, with the assistance of Namier, found the Poles useful in propaganda. The foreign office saw the Yugoslav programme as a solution to the nationality problems in the Balkans which would facilitate the negotiation of a Balkan league. Naval intelligence, working through

Gaunt, found the Czechs in the United States useful in espionage and counter-espionage. These branches of the government all acted as if they were following a directive from the cabinet to use and encourage all forces opposed to the Central powers. But the cabinet had not considered the question and had not issued such a directive. In most cases the co-operation between the government and the émigrés was well established before the cabinet was informed. The initiation of co-operation between the government and the émigrés was often the work of minor officials who consulted neither the cabinet nor their counterparts in other departments. Officials like Namier, Trevelyan, Clerk, Drummond, Gregory, Spring Rice, Macdonogh and Gaunt acted instinctively to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Although they were not acting on any central directive, the similarity of their instincts gave a measure of uniformity to the action of the British government. The non-existent decision to use and encourage all forces opposed to the Central powers was carried out as thoroughly as any formal cabinet decision.

The Yugoslavs were the first subject nationality to play a role in British foreign policy. From its first contact with the Yugoslavs the foreign office realized that their programme might facilitate the negotiations for a Balkan league. If Serbia could be tempted by the idea of a Yugoslav state to make concessions to Bulgaria in Macedonia, it might end the Serbo-Bulgarian hostility which was the major obstacle to a Balkan league. For that reason the foreign office promoted the Yugoslav programme during the negotiations and even after the failure of this policy continued to be attracted to the idea of a Yugoslav state.

The Czechoslovaks and Poles achieved their initial importance in foreign policy because of the apparent threat to British interests in the

United States posed by the German and Irish-Americans. Although the seriousness of this threat was exaggerated, the fear of the German and Irish-Americans was an important factor in British policy towards the United States. At first the government attempted to counter this threat by propaganda designed to damage the reputations of Germany and Austria-Hungary by dealing with their treatment of the subject nationalities. This was followed by propaganda aimed at the Slav minorities in the United States and designed to win their support and promote political organization for the purpose of counteracting the effect of the German-American vote. This task was not left solely to the propaganda authorities for there is every indication that Spring Rice, Gaunt, Trevelyan and Horodyski also played a direct part in encouraging the various American Slavic leaders to organize against the German-Americans. This propaganda implicitly promoted the cause of national self-determination and there can be little doubt that the emerging American interest in eastern Europe was promoted, if not caused, by the competition among the belligerents, particularly on the Polish issue, for American support. The seriousness of the German-American threat, the importance of the Slavic minorities and the success of British propaganda may have been exaggerated by the government, but there can be no doubt that, acting in these considerations, it included references to the Poles, Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs in the reply to President Wilson's peace note because it believed that such references would appeal to Wilson and to the American public. Possibly such references were unnecessary or ineffectual, but their inclusion in the note was consistent with previous British policy in the conduct of Anglo-American relations. The reply to President Wilson in January 1917 was the most advanced statement by the Allies on the subject of national self-deter-

mination prior to the declaration of the supreme war council on June 3, 1918. It did not represent British policy but rather what the Allies believed the Americans wanted to hear. If they were right the explanation can be found, to some extent, in previous British propaganda.

Had the émigrés been incapable of contributing to the war effort it is unlikely that relations between them and the government would have developed. But once the process began it was always easier, and more profitable, for the officials to expand the areas of co-operation than to withdraw from it entirely. Although the government adopted no commitments to national self-determination, the co-operation did promote close relations between the officials and the émigrés with the result that the officials were educated on the problems of eastern Europe and often converted to the cause of national self-determination. The co-operation helped the émigrés to establish relations with the government through which they were then able to inform the government of their political programmes and of the problems of eastern Europe. The initial co-operation in espionage and propaganda, which was of infinitesimal significance if compared to the total war effort of the British government, provided the necessary basis upon which more significant co-operation could be based in 1917.

Since eastern Europe was an area of secondary importance, the British government gave very little thought to its post-war settlement. British aims were considered only in the most general terms and, in essence, they would be satisfied by a settlement which would be conducive to peace and stability and which would not increase the military potential of one of the great powers. National self-determination was not the only solution which would fulfill these criteria - an equally good case could be put forward for the status quo ante bellum - and there was no reason to assume

that it would be the best solution. Lacking any simple solution to the problems of eastern Europe, which in any case were of secondary importance, the government followed a general policy of using these problems to increase the military potential of the Entente.

Between 1914 and 1916 this general policy involved the use and encouragement of the subject nationalities. It also involved the acceptance in the treaty of London, in exchange for Italian support, of terms which were generally recognized as politically reprehensible. The Entente could achieve the greatest strategic advantage from the problems of eastern Europe, however, not through encouragement of the subject nationalities but by the elimination of Austria from the war through negotiation. When the government believed that a separate peace with Austria-Hungary could be negotiated, it pursued this policy just as it had previously encouraged the nationalities. Even while seeking a separate peace it continued to use the émigrés. The apparent military position of the Entente in 1917 and 1918 was not so strong that it could afford to abstain from the use of the nationalities against Austria-Hungary and particularly from the use of their armed forces. For that reason, when a separate peace proved impossible, the Entente was left with no other alternative than to give maximum support to the nationalities and, in return, to use them in every conceivable way against Austria-Hungary. In May 1918 the government decided to give all possible support to the subject nationalities on the assumption that it would either force the Austrians to make a separate peace or would destroy Austria-Hungary. Either alternative was perfectly acceptable to the government and remained so until the armistice.

The Entente could not use the nationalities without becoming somewhat dependent upon them. By 1918 the Poles and Czechoslovaks were in a

position, because of the formation of national armies, to make demands on the government which could not be brushed aside. Indeed the government felt compelled to recognize the Czechoslovaks and Poles and to give at least some measure of informal recognition to the Yugoslavs. But despite pressure from the nationalities, it was able to avoid commitments to them which would have the legal force of the terms of the treaty of London and, above all, was able to avoid specific territorial commitments in eastern Europe. It was committed to national self-determination in eastern Europe only by implication.

The development of British relations with the nationalities during the war is an example of the government's handling of an issue of secondary importance. There is no reason to assume that any other issue was handled in a similar fashion but nevertheless the process is itself intrinsically interesting. These relations did not develop according to any clearly defined comprehensive policy for the treatment of the subject nationalities but evolved because of innumerable minor and often unrelated decisions made by lesser officials often without consultation with one another. To solve immediate problems these officials made decisions which established the initial contacts between the government and the émigrés. For example, the home office decision not to intern Poles, Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs was taken regardless of considerations of foreign policy because of the immediate problems in the internment of enemy aliens. Although this decision appeared trivial in 1914, the émigrés could not have campaigned for national self-determination from an internment camp. The fabric of British relations with the subject nationalities was gradually built up by a series of minor decisions each bringing the government and the émigrés closer together. One decision facilitated the next, and even before the émigrés were brought

to the attention of the cabinet, their relations with the government had evolved into a rudimentary but still discernible pattern. As further relations developed they tended to follow this initial pattern so that the government's position in relation to the nationalities in November 1918 was not one which had been planned but one which had evolved as the officials turned to the émigrés for assistance in solving immediate problems arising from the conduct of the war.

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