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British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War, by
Elisabeth Barker

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culmination of a policy which the National Government had followed continuously since Hitler's coming to power. The author argues that the British never seriously doubted (as perhaps they should have done) that Germany's ascendancy in Eastern and Southeastern Europe was incompatible with their own survival as a European great power; hence they never really contemplated giving Hitler a "free hand" in the East, for that would have overturned the existing balance of power to their permanent disadvantage. Down to 1939 British policy concentrated instead on "resistance short of war" and took primarily economic and financial forms, supplemented by occasional talk of colonial concessions. This policy reflected Chamberlain's belief in the paramount role which the British economy would have to play in peace or war and a general conviction that military combinations against Hitler, made in the name of deterrence, would only bring war closer.

After the German occupation of Prague, which seemed to show that Hitler's appetite was insatiable, Halifax emerged as the chief formulator of policy and finally committed the British to the defense of Poland on the grounds that to do less would open Germany's way to the peaceful conquest of Eastern Europe, thus nullifying the West's economic leverage on the Continent and irreparably damaging its standing with the United States. All this was done in an atmosphere heavily freighted with feelings of humiliation, uncertainty, and incipient panic; and it may, Newman concludes, have been done for invalid reasons, because it is still not established whether Hitler meant to compass the ruin of the British Empire.

On its salient points the book is consistently persuasive and often convincing. Even so one may wonder whether Newman has not made too much of what he calls the "middle course" between unilateral concessions ("appeasement") and a sturdy defensive coalition (the "Grand Alliance"), for as he himself admits, the economic gambits on which it was based frequently had an *ad hoc* and very tentative quality. Similarly one may doubt whether he has got the emphases exactly right when he insists that the Cabinet knew for a certainty in March that its guarantee would have no deterrent effect on Hitler and amounted, therefore, to an anticipatory declaration of war. Several of the book's themes and conclusions have been foreshadowed elsewhere, but the controlled orchestration of the whole makes this an independently valuable contribution to the on-going appraisal of British policy during the last period in which the deliberations and decisions of Whitehall swayed the destinies of entire continents.

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ELISABETH BARKER. *British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War.* (Studies in Russian and East European History.) New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976. Pp. viii, 320. \$27.50.

In recent years a number of studies have appeared which provide a much better understanding of the tumultuous events in Southeast Europe during World War II. Elisabeth Barker has made use of recently opened British archival material to present a detailed though narrowly focused examination of Britain's policy in the Balkans as devised and implemented by the Foreign Office and SOE. While the work covers British policy toward all the states from Hungary to Greece, the author devotes much more space to countries other than Greece and Yugoslavia.

Britain's interests in the area have traditionally focused on the periphery in places such as Greece and the Straits. During the interwar era Britain tended to follow the lead of France in its relations with the governments of the Balkan states. The outbreak of war forced the British to attach greater significance to the Balkans as a means of demonstrating their ability to carry on the struggle in Europe at a time when they were practically shut out of the continent by Hitler. Their efforts at bolstering the resistance of the Southeast European governments to Nazi blandishments down to 1941, were, as the author clearly demonstrates, inhibited by both a lack of resources and the fear of provoking Hitler and thus achieved little success. A clash with the Axis forces in this area was inevitable as Hitler shifted his strategy from a direct attack on Britain to one of dealing her a blow in a "peripheral" place like the eastern Mediterranean.

The author notes Churchill's desire to use the Balkans militarily to attack the Nazis as well as his concern to keep the Russians from acquiring a predominant position in the area after the war ended. She then illustrates in detail the divergence in outlook between the various policy and action branches of the government that made British activities in this area much less unified than many have presumed them to have been. Barker also mentions the differences of opinion between the British and Americans over policy concerning the Balkans but does not fully explore the problem.

As the war progressed and the balance tipped in favor of the Allies, the British were faced with the unwelcome though not unexpected fact that the Soviet Union was now the dominant power in the area. Whatever assurances the British had given to the leaders of the Southeast European states were negated by the fact that, except for Greece and to some extent Yugoslavia, Britain's presence was limited to propaganda, some military missions, and a far from perfect intelligence network. Barker

argues persuasively that the British, acting on the basis of political realism, recognized the certainty of Russian dominance in Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary by the summer of 1944, and accepted this as an accomplished fact in return for retaining a measure of influence in an area of real interest, Greece.

The author's choice of a year-by-year and a country-by-country approach results in a large number of chapters (twenty) and inescapable fragmentation and repetition in the narrative. A third of the text is devoted to the period from 1939 to 1941 and the rest to the years 1941 and 1944. An annoying though small number of typographical errors (half a sentence is missing on page 230) do not significantly detract from the considerable worth of the book.

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PHYLLIS AUTY and RICHARD CLOGG, editors. *British Policy Towards Wartime Resistance in Yugoslavia and Greece*. New York: Barnes and Noble, in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1975. Pp. xii, 308. \$27.50.

This book is a collection of articles based on material delivered at a conference at the University of London in 1973. Most of the contributors were participants in the events they describe. Elizabeth Barker's excellent piece on the foreign policy of the Foreign Office toward Yugoslavia concludes that, in priority, the Foreign Office was more interested in protecting the area from postwar Communism than in defeating Germans. F. W. D. Deakin exposes "The Myth of an Allied Landing in the Balkans . . ." as an American obsession, in a piece that supports the official histories of his British colleagues, Michael Howard and John Ehrman. Barker and Deakin are professional historians in the best sense but that is not true of Bickham Sweet-Escott and S. W. Bailey, former SOE agents who seem imbued with what Barker elsewhere called "a sort of T. E. Lawrence complex" (p. 30). Bailey was parachuted to Mihailović's headquarters as Senior British Liaison Officer. His article, "British Policy Towards . . . Mihailović," carefully documents Mihailović's collaboration with the Nazis, but his expressed purpose is to plead for a greater sympathy for the behavior of the Chetniks.

Three articles on Greece by Brigadier E. C. W. Myers, C. M. Woodhouse, and Richard Clogg are more thematically integrated. The three authors agree that the Foreign Office and Churchill were responsible for the Greek catastrophe by their insistent support of the king's determination to re-

turn to Greece before a plebiscite on the monarchy. All three agree that the critical point of no return was passed in September 1943 with the politically disastrous visit to Cairo of six Resistance representatives from occupied Greece. When the delegates insisted on discussing the composition of the Greek government-in-exile, Ambassador Leeper curtly terminated their visit and ordered them to return. The Foreign Office supported Leeper. The stunned delegates now became convinced that "British policy" was determined to restore the monarchy. This sad September moment fatally set events into motion toward their sanguinary dénouement: the British intervention and the bloody suppression of the resistance in the Battle for Athens in December 1944.

But the three authors differ as to why the Foreign Office should have changed its policy. To Myers, Communism was a false issue used by the Foreign Office in order to disguise its primary policy of restoring the monarchy. Woodhouse, on the other hand, has been persistently a cold war warrior. Nevertheless, he now concludes that the Greek Communist Party (KKE) was divided in counsel, unsure of its policy, and willing to seek an accommodation with the British. It was the insensitivity or lack of knowledge of these conditions, or both, on the part of the Foreign Office which led to the tragedy of the December Days. In other words Woodhouse has moved considerably in lessening the KKE's responsibility for the fighting in Athens. Clogg argues that, had the British lessened their support of the king they would have deprived the KKE of its strongest appeal which was to the republican sentiment of "ninety percent" of the population. Thus at the root of Clogg's argument one finds, again, the proverbial fear of Communism as the *deus ex machina*. These differences are most important because the premises behind them measure the inadequacy of Greek resistance studies to date. What the three really disagree about is how best to restore the state, and they refuse to understand the Greek resistance as a national and revolutionary movement.

This collection underscores the importance of the new documentation in the Public Record Office but it does not offer any new historical insights. Barker (*British Policy in South-East Europe*), Deakin (*Embattled Mountain*) and Woodhouse (*Struggle for Greece, 1941-1949*) have recently published books broader in scope.

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ALUN CHALFONT. *Montgomery of Alamein*. New York: Atheneum. 1976. Pp xiv, 365. \$12.95.