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**‘The impression is growing... that the United States is hard when dealing with us’:**

**Ernest Bevin and Anglo-American relations at the dawn of the Cold War.**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's views on Anglo-American relations during the crucial year of 1947. It challenges the view that Bevin was unquestioningly pro-American. It demonstrates how Bevin pushed the embassy in Washington to project a view of Britain, based on answering American criticisms robustly. He saw Britain's problems to be a consequence of American failures to act responsibly, as he saw it. Bevin was frustrated with American attitudes, and sought to bring them to underwrite his own policies and shape theirs around his strong belief that Britain had earned their support and that they should compensate Britain for its past sacrifices in the common cause. Bevin was not coldly pragmatic, nor was he uncritically pro-American, or merely a puppet in the hands of his Foreign Office officials.

## **Keywords**

Anglo-American relations; Bevin; Cold War; History; United States Foreign Policy

**‘The impression is growing... that the United States is hard when dealing with us’:**

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In the years 1946 to 1948, United States foreign policy was in a state of flux. The US relationship with Great Britain that had been forged during World War II was one of many areas of policy that developed rapidly in response to the new conditions of peace, increased US economic power, the development of national security ideas and the commitment to continued active participation in world affairs. After a shaky start, with the reduction of military cooperation to a peacetime basis and the difficult negotiations over a loan from the US to Britain at the end of 1945, Anglo-American relations continued to develop uncertainly towards partnership in 1946. While former prime minister Winston Churchill’s plea at Fulton, Missouri for a renewed Anglo-American alliance tends to get most attention in narratives of the period, the man who mattered most on the British side was the Labour Government’s Foreign Secretary, the powerful labour union leader Ernest Bevin. He it was who conducted the British side of Anglo-American relations as the two countries gradually drew together again in close alliance. The key year in this process was 1947, with the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Aid, and the breakdown of cooperation with the USSR, and the path towards this end was by no means smooth. While the outcome was undoubtedly one of which Churchill approved, it should not be assumed that his and Bevin’s views of the United States and its connection to Great Britain and most importantly its attitude to British vital interests, were the same. Bevin’s views on this question have drawn plenty of attention from historians, but this article will argue that the picture given for this hinge year of 1947 is far from complete and has led to a distorted view of Bevin’s aims when moving the two countries towards a closer relationship.

### *Bevin as Foreign Secretary*

Assessments of Ernest Bevin's tenure as Foreign Secretary from 1945 to 1951 have tended to divide into two main schools of thought. The scholarship that emerged in the 1980s, after the opening of the British archives for the period, tended to celebrate Bevin as one of the great foreign secretaries. Central to this claim was the assertion that he was the prime initiator of foreign policy in that period, able to lead and direct the Foreign Office (FO) by the strength of his character and the clarity of his vision.<sup>1</sup> He was particularly praised for what some claimed to be a 'grand design'. Central to this design was the creation of a close alliance with the United States and the rejection of the idea of Britain being a 'Third Force' independent of and equal to the US and USSR, which was advocated by the left wing of the Labour party. Bevin worked hard to draw the United States into taking over some of Britain's responsibilities, and so was, to some, a major influence in drawing the United States into the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union. The central text of this school of thought was the third volume in Alan Bullock's study of Bevin, which went beyond biography to encompass an extensive engagement with policy-making. To Bullock and those who followed his lead, as well as many who served under him, Bevin was a skilful statesman, an effective combination of pragmatist and visionary, who played a seminal role in organising western resistance to Soviet expansionism, and most importantly in drawing the United States into playing an active role in aiding and defending Britain and Western Europe through Marshall Aid and the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The core of these endeavours were what Bullock saw as Bevin's purposeful, and wise, pursuit of the revival of the Anglo-American alliance.<sup>2</sup>

An attempt to revise this depiction of Bevin emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. To revisionists, far from being a visionary initiator of policy, Bevin was quickly drawn by his senior officials into adopting the FO's interpretation of the situation: most

notably when it came to their rapidly intensifying hostility towards the Soviet Union. Bevin was essentially a tool in the hands of his officials, adopting their view of an expansionist USSR that threatened British imperial interests. This led him to follow a policy, especially in Germany, which was more confrontational to the Soviets than it needed to be. He became readily susceptible to what is presented as a key concomitant to this FO policy, a preference for a close Anglo-American alliance as the buttress for an anti-Soviet Western European grouping.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to Bullock's near-hagiographic approach, revisionists depicted Bevin as narrow-minded in his anti-communism, exaggerating the Soviet threat and unrealistically seeking to maintain Britain as a world power.<sup>4</sup> The main theme of much of this writing was that Britain missed an opportunity after the end of the Second World War to accept its diminished world role and to forge ahead as a leader of Western Europe.<sup>5</sup> Historians had shown by this point that Prime Minister Clement Attlee had had misgivings about the maintenance of Britain's worldwide commitments, and had dared to question some basic geo-strategic assumptions.<sup>6</sup> Revisionists highlighted the role of Bevin in arguing Attlee out of these views. Bevin cherished a continued world role for Britain.

It was pointed out, notably by John Kent and John Young, that until it proved impossible, Bevin did in fact see Britain's potential to be a third power, equal to the United States and Soviet Union, based on the remaining British imperial territories and centring on developing the resources of Africa.<sup>7</sup> However, revisionists, by and large, did not contest the idea that Bevin vigorously fought against the 'third force' advocacy of left wing rebel MPs led by Richard Crossman, and clashed in particular with them over the issue of close relations with the United States.<sup>8</sup> Orthodox writers had celebrated the skill with which Bevin drew together the United States, Canada and the democracies of Northern and Western Europe into a coherent group able to resist Soviet expansionism.<sup>9</sup> While revisionists

questioned the idea that Bevin was operating on the basis of a strategic plan, they accepted the established view that he was committed without reservation to a close Anglo-American cooperative relationship. Indeed, it was suggested that Bevin 'loved the United States.'<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Warner described the development under Bevin of an 'obsequious dependence on the United States.'<sup>11</sup>

Revisionism failed to dent the orthodoxy on Bevin, though Bevin's limitations with regard to the Palestine issue, his attachment to the idea of development of the empire and his failure to follow through on the issue of the leadership of Western Europe have qualified the uncritical, indeed hagiographic, image. With consensus between traditionalists and revisionists on Bevin's views of the United States, aspects of his aims in dealing with the US have remained under-analysed, amongst them the question of whether his foreign policy was actually based on a fundamentally different picture of the US to that of his left-wing critics. Thus, when Wayne Knight argued that Bevin and the FO were clearly committed to the Anglo-American alliance, and to projecting the image of Britain as America's 'sure friend,' the implication is that Bevin's views on the US were some way from those of the left. Any reservations he may have had regarding the predatory nature of American capitalism were subordinated to the policy of expressing positive opinions of, and gratitude towards the US.<sup>12</sup>

A point that a number of historians have made is that Bevin did not write his views down extensively. He kept no diary and was not a great letter-writer. If Peter Weiler is correct that officials in the FO were 'ghost-writers' of papers sent out under his name, then there are even fewer genuine unmediated examples of Bevin's thought while Foreign Secretary.<sup>13</sup> Of course, it was usual practice for Foreign Secretaries' telegrams, Cabinet papers and memoranda to be drafted by others. For those trying to identify Bevin's personal views independent of those of his officials, this poses a problem. It makes it difficult to challenge the idea advanced by revisionists that Bevin adopted the views of the FO.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, Cabinet and Defence Committee records are not verbatim minutes, but summaries of discussion and conclusions, and in view of the principle of cabinet collective responsibility are designed to elide over differences of opinion. They are thus a flawed source of Bevin's views. In a similar vein, his meetings with foreign diplomats were based on FO briefings – though careful deconstruction can sometimes identify Bevin's particular and unique tropes and themes. However, it is striking how little direct quotation of the man himself there is in accounts of Bevin as Foreign Secretary, as opposed to telegrams and papers put forward in his name, but the product of the combined efforts of the Bevin and his drafting officials. Views are frequently ascribed to him from more or less indirect records, or from inference. However, Bevin's personal views can be teased out from the record. Evidence of Bevin himself writing on key issues unmediated is particularly worthy of attention. When this is done for the key period of 1947, when Bevin in the established picture is seen as beginning to enact his plan of forging a close Anglo-American alliance, it becomes clear that his view of the United States and its policy to Britain was far from uncritical. Indeed, his advocacy of public expressions of gratitude and solidarity towards the US was increasingly qualified by a festering resentment – even as he defended the US against his own critics on the left – of what he saw as self-centred and ungenerous US policies.

*'An ungenerous attitude'*

Alan Bullock wrote that while Bevin was keen for the US to take a greater share of responsibility for the security of Greece, Turkey and the Middle East, he understood better than many of his colleagues and party members the difficulties that the Americans found in adjusting to this more active and interventionist peacetime world role. Bullock sees Bevin as determined to be patient and not to force the pace.<sup>15</sup> Throughout 1947, as the US gradually came to be more assured in the new role, in the orthodox view Bevin was measured, calm

and skilful in moving them forward, calibrating his approach carefully. A fresh examination of the record gives a rather different picture of Bevin's patience and understanding regarding American policies, and in particular shows him less attuned to, or tolerant of, the rhythms of US congressional and bureaucratic politics. To be sure, he pressed for patience and public support for American views.<sup>16</sup> However, he had not found US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes a congenial negotiating partner while in New York for the Council of Foreign Ministers in November to December 1946, and it was not in Bevin's nature to respond tolerantly to the kind of bitter criticism he received from elements in the US media regarding his views on the Palestine question.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, as the year turned, there was a broad range of criticisms of Britain and its foreign policy being widely voiced in the United States.

The start of 1947 saw the British government faced with multiple problems in foreign and economic affairs. Attlee renewed his challenge to the basis of British strategic policy by asking once again whether policy should be built around bases in the Middle East. Bevin and the Chiefs of Staff answered that Britain's continued status as a great power, and the defence of its vital interests against a possibly expansionist Soviet Union required it.<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein, but this time with Attlee's support, the small GEN163 committee of the Cabinet approved the development of Britain's own atomic weapon. As Bevin remarked, 'I don't want any other Foreign Secretary of this country to be talked at or by a Secretary of State in the United States as I have just had in my discussions with Mr Byrnes. We have got to have this thing over here whatever it costs...'<sup>19</sup> A key achievement at this time was the Treaty of Dunkirk, re-forming the Anglo-French alliance (the only potential enemy mentioned was Germany).<sup>20</sup> But the costs and difficulties of maintaining control in India and Palestine were recognised as beyond British means and the decisions were made in the first two months of 1947 to withdraw from both – and also withdraw aid for the Greek government in its fight against communist rebels. The situation was aggravated beyond measure by the blizzards of



28 January, ushering in the harshest weather conditions since 1929. The resultant coal shortages brought transport and industry to a standstill in a way that German bombers never had, threw people out of work and caused considerable domestic hardship.<sup>21</sup> Uncertainties about US policies remained strong after Bevin's frustrating time in New York, and to cap it all, Bevin himself was ill, his heart suffering under the strain. It is not surprising that there should be pessimism on the other side of the Atlantic about Britain's future.

The British ambassador to Washington, Lord Inverchapel, had taken up his post in the summer of 1946. Even though American negotiators had, in British eyes, driven a hard bargain in negotiating the loan in the autumn of 1945, a bitter struggle had followed to convince Congress to approve it.<sup>22</sup> This finally happened shortly after Inverchapel arrived in Washington, and both he and the FO defined his primary task as to convince American opinion that Britain was worth backing. Much of Inverchapel's attention was therefore focused on signs of how Americans regarded Britain. Bevin had picked Inverchapel for the post, but their relations had soured a little when the ambassador tried to persuade Bevin to make a trip to the US to sway them with his personality. This kind of public relations exercise did not appeal to Bevin, as it might have to Churchill and he turned down the suggestion robustly.<sup>23</sup> Inverchapel continued, however, to attempt to monitor the mood swings in Washington, and to influence it where he could. At the same time, he sought to explain it to Whitehall and to try to mould British actions so that they would play best in the Washington environment he observed. Bevin's responses to this particular style of reporting and policy recommendation, far from showing his sympathies with the sensitivities of parochial American opinion, evinced his impatience not only with it, but also with the Washington embassy for apparently endorsing rather than countering it. To Bevin, the embassy's task was to stand up for British interests and defend its viewpoints, and to build from there to persuade the Americans take action. The embassy on the other hand, saw its job

as primarily to 'get on the inside' and stay there, showing how close Britain was to American ways of doing things. The embassy saw its most important task as to sell Britain to the Americans as a going concern.<sup>24</sup> Bevin's personal dislike of such an approach, which contrasts with attempts of his FO officials to be 'balanced,' is shown dramatically in March 1947 in a letter he wrote while in Moscow for the next Council of Foreign Ministers meeting.

On 10 March 1947, Inverchapel expressed his concerns about the latest manifestations of American misgivings about Britain and its Labour Government in a letter which went directly to Prime Minister Attlee, for Bevin was already in Moscow. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Inverchapel warned, were afraid that Great Britain and the rest of western Europe would be unable to resist Soviet pressure. Moreover, he felt that American caution about trusting Britain with atomic secrets was indicative of a broad trend in American opinion, as well as a specific response to the Nunn May espionage affair.<sup>25</sup> He noted that there had been apprehension at the time of the British general election in 1945 that a socialist British government would align itself with the Soviet Union. This had died down when it became evident that there was continuity in foreign policy from the Churchill government and that nationalisation would leave the major part of the British economy in private hands. More recently, though, the volume of left-wing criticism of the government's foreign policy, notably the Crossman resolution in the House of Commons in November 1946, revived apprehensions that under this pressure the government would appease rather than resist Soviet encroachment. The resolution, which was strongly anti-American, and advocated the improvement of relations with the USSR, was easily defeated, but while the Conservatives supported the government, US apprehension was raised by the significant number of Labour MPs who abstained.<sup>26</sup> A grave fear, Inverchapel asserted, had emerged about Britain's ability, as opposed to will, to sustain her share of world leadership: 'many intelligent Americans ... ask whether even the British Isles can indefinitely remain proof

against Soviet blackmail.’ By announcing the withdrawal of support from Greece and Turkey, Britain was seen to have abandoned a ‘strategic commitment which we have hitherto strenuously upheld in the face of all domestic and foreign criticism.’ If this was not to be seen as the prelude to further yielding of ground to the Soviets, ‘we must seek suitable opportunities to show that we that have a clear conception of the commitments which are vital to our security and that we are confident of our ability to maintain the status of a great power.’<sup>27</sup>

Attlee replied to Inverchapel himself, and also forwarded the letter to his Foreign Secretary.<sup>28</sup> Bevin was moved to send a six page letter, written from the heart. He was at that time awaiting indications of whether the new US Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, would be an improvement on his predecessor. Initial impressions of Marshall in the early stages of the Moscow meeting were not very favourable.<sup>29</sup> The letter was written just five days after Truman made the statement to Congress that quickly became labelled the Truman Doctrine, and which hindsight has seen as a turning point in US attitudes towards intervention overseas.<sup>30</sup> However, although he was aware of the speech, he does not mention it nor give any hint that he sensed a change in US policy doctrines, which rather undermines the argument advanced first by Francis Williams in 1952 that Bevin had deliberately timed the announcement of withdrawal of British aid to Greece in order to engender a response by Truman along these very lines.<sup>31</sup> Instead, he launched a sharp critique of United States attitudes to Britain.

Bevin acknowledged the ‘Crossman venture’, as he called it, had had an effect on American attitudes, though he had done his best to minimise it, with some success, in discussions with Byrnes and Senators Tom Connally and Arthur Vandenberg. However, Bevin felt the problem went deeper than that. There were some matters the US government needed to remember. He had put these to Byrnes and he would try to impress them on

Marshall when he got the opportunity to talk quietly to him. Bevin then put the blame for Britain's post-war difficulties squarely on the Americans, and specifically on the 'sudden snapping of Lease-Lend.' He said that at the time the loan was being negotiated he had impressed on Will Clayton, under-secretary of state with responsibility for economic affairs, that if the Americans took the action they proposed and did not give Britain time to stabilise itself, especially in food, then they would create a situation where they would have to step in and take over Britain's responsibilities themselves. He had suggested to them that that was actually what they were after, but they denied it. Bevin said that he had then pointed out:

(and this has a great bearing on their future attitude towards us)  
 that if they treated us in the narrow conception then revealed  
 we could not in the immediate future carry the load we had  
 been in the habit of bearing.

Bevin then cited the example of British support for Greece, and claimed that the British had met American wishes in that country, but had received no financial support, even though Bevin was 'constantly emphasising that we were getting to the end of our tether.' Bevin felt that US officials tended just to gloss over these matters. In a similar vein, Bevin turned to the issue of the former Italian colony of Cyrenaica, which Bevin at one time had ambitions to make into a British strategic holding. He blamed the failure to gain a good settlement of this issue squarely on the Americans. This, he said, meant the British missed a potential budget saving of £50 million a year. Bevin's broad point was clear: far from seeing Britain's economic problems as a sign of their lack of willpower or creeping socialism the Americans should recognise the impact of their own policies – and therefore see Britain in a different light.<sup>32</sup>

The accuracy of Bevin's recollections of the recent past is less important here than the fact that this was his perception. The issue clearly rankled deeply. In the letter, Bevin went

on to discuss domestic attitudes to the United States, in a manner which showed that he shared many of the views that had motivated the Crossmanite critique. These were the views, he was careful to say, of many of his great friends in the Labour Party who were by no means fellow-travellers (so they were not just motivated by an unthinking pro-Sovietism that meant their views should be dismissed). These people, Bevin said, with the implication that he fully understood this element of the views of his critics and even sympathised with it, were influenced in their view of Anglo-American relations because they felt that the United States administration 'has given us a pretty raw deal.' Sometimes, when focusing on Bevin the statesman, and basing analysis on FO records, historians can fail to factor into the equation his cultural background and the firm set of attitudes and perceptions that he carried with him from his working class and trade union background into government and diplomacy. Yet they were a by no means negligible part of Bevin's world view.

Focusing on the issue of food imports, Bevin reported, with evident sympathy, a growing feeling in England in the constituencies that our people are being kept on rations and going through difficult times as a result of what is sometimes regarded as an ungenerous attitude when it gets to business and not talk.

He gave a homely example, that of his own charwoman, who had requested that she could start work an hour earlier, at 6 a.m., in order to be able to join the food queue at 10 a.m. so she would be able to feed her family. I am sure, he wrote 'America does not understand what this means.' These difficulties, he said, might be simple, but 'they are burning deep.' Britain's economic problems were thus in Bevin's view the United States's responsibility – not a consequence of his global foreign policy as some of his critics alleged. When ministers went to the United States to try to improve this situation, they found, he claimed, that they faced greater difficulties than other countries that deal with America. There runs through the

letter an aggrieved sense that Americans discriminated against Britain. He appreciated interventions by individual American officials that eased immediate problems, but his gratitude was tempered by a strong feeling that such actions would not be necessary if it was appreciated what part Britain had played in the war and in international affairs since.

There was no hostility to the US as such, he went on, 'but the impression is growing and reflecting itself through some of the most loyal Trade Unionists and loyal members of the Labour Party [that is, not the Crossmanite rebels] that the United States is hard when dealing with us.' He speculated that the problem was in departments other than the State Department, where departmental prejudice meant a failure 'to understand the actual position and so in their actions to make contributions to a better understanding and good relations.' He asked Inverchapel to mention these matters 'when you are talking in your own way', and ended typically bullishly, 'I am not yielding to any pressure, if I may say so from anybody. But whatever happens we are going to get through. The United States Chiefs of Staff and others need be under no delusion about that.'<sup>33</sup>

Bevin does not seem to have repeated these views in so many words to Marshall while they were in Moscow.<sup>34</sup> Bevin had been unwell at the start of the conference, but his health improved and he became immersed in other problems. By the end of the long and fruitless conference, he and his officials had formed an improved view of Marshall's capabilities – though when Bevin reported privately to Attlee, and warned that the 'two big boys' were increasingly lining up against each other, he did not entirely excuse the Americans of responsibility for this state of affairs.<sup>35</sup>

This letter is particularly interesting in the light of the Cabinet discussions that had taken place in London before Bevin had left for Moscow on the subject of British aid to Greece and Turkey. Byrnes had given rather vague assurances that the US would assist with the burden of helping the anti-communist activities of the Turkish and Greek governments.

This was a burden that the Cabinet saw to be increasingly beyond Britain's means. Chancellor of the Exchequer Hugh Dalton was pressing for complete withdrawal, but the Cabinet had decided to find out how much of the burden the US would be prepared to bear. It has been suggested that Bevin made sure this was couched in such a way to force the Americans to make a quick decision, by holding out the spectre of immediate British withdrawal. Robert Frazier has raised doubts that the British were quite so machiavellian in their strategy: this letter does show that Bevin for one was in a mood to take whatever opportunity offered to bring the Americans to 'take up their responsibilities' – but he does not seem to have seen the Truman Doctrine, which some claim the British demarche to the Americans deliberately provoked, as showing that they were doing this.<sup>36</sup> However, it does give some substance to the idea, for it shows Bevin strongly concerned that the Americans pick up the burden that the British, in his view, had been carrying for far too long. On the other hand, his main emphasis was certainly not that the US should replace Britain, but that it should moderate its financial and economic policies to enable Britain to continue to maintain their shared interests. It was a broader American attitude, rather than just the matter of the Eastern Mediterranean, about which Bevin was so exercised.

*The Americans come through – after a fashion*

In the following months, the US government gave signs that it was moving to a new attitude regarding economic assistance for Europe, which culminated in Marshall's speech at Harvard University on 5 June 1947, in which he said that the US would provide support if the Europeans devised a viable multi-national plan for recovery. Bevin acted with vigour to seize the opportunity and co-ordinate a European response – though not quite so fast as some claim.<sup>37</sup> However, it remained the case that the British felt that their own economic situation was not being treated sympathetically, or with realisation of the consequences of the

conditions the Americans had insisted upon for the post-war loan.<sup>38</sup> The Americans made clear that they would not help individual European countries, or give aid ‘piecemeal,’ and also said that this included Britain, which was not to be treated as a special case.<sup>39</sup> The run on sterling caused by convertibility and the failure to address the issue of the valuation of the dollar meant that Marshall’s initiative notwithstanding, Britain faced a severe financial and economic crisis in the last five months of 1947. This situation brought out once again Bevin’s sense of grievance regarding the US policies that he believed were responsible for the crisis, and his impatience with reports that the Americans were doubting Britain’s own moral strength as a consequence of the problems they themselves had induced. This is evident in another interaction with the Washington Embassy, and this time Bevin’s ire was ostensibly directed at the embassy itself, though the real target was once again what he saw as unjustified American attitudes (which the embassy, he thought, was tolerating rather than soundly refuting).

Sir John ‘Jock’ Balfour, who was the chargé d’affaires in Washington at the time, had reported on 8 August concerning American criticisms of a British decision to withdraw the last of their garrisons from Greece.<sup>40</sup> He had gone on to describe a cluster of American views, raising the familiar spectres once again: American suspicions that British problems were of their own making, due to their laziness, weakness and economic unproductivity, coupled with a drift to the left that made them inclined to appease the Soviet Union. There was a belief, Balfour reported, that the British had, in *New York Times* journalist Arthur Krock’s words, ‘deadlinitis’: that is, that they tended to leave it to the last possible moment to announce major policy shifts, which always amounted to retreats. The implication was that they were using this tactic to force the Americans to take over their responsibilities by hustling them into making quick decisions in a contrived atmosphere of crisis.<sup>41</sup>



While the FO officials found some truth in these remarks, and noted the US viewpoints merely for information, Bevin exploded. He scrawled on the letter that Balfour was ‘quite out of focus’ and ‘his mentality is not good.’<sup>42</sup> A few days earlier, on 31 July, Bevin had spoken sharply to US Ambassador Lewis Douglas. During a conversation on the British desire to nationalise coal production in the Ruhr valley region in Germany, Bevin said that Britain would not be ‘put in the dock by the US just as we had always refused to be put in the dock by the Soviet Union. We were not in dock in 1940 nor would we be now.’ He told Douglas that Britain was going to withdraw its military mission from Greece. Two days later, Douglas told him Marshall was concerned at developments in British policy in Greece, Italy and the Middle East. In return, Bevin gave no ground, stressing how he had quickly responded to Marshall’s Harvard speech, and saying that Britain, France and Italy needed temporary aid.<sup>43</sup> He was thus already quite fired up over American attitudes when Balfour’s report came to him, and was clearly reacting quite differently to his officials. He now outlined a reply to Balfour, which, if sent, would have replicated, if not surpassed, the language of the March letter to Inverchapel.

Bevin said that he resented the suggestion that Britain used ‘shock tactics’ with the Americans. The question of withdrawal of troops from Greece was discussed, he said, a year ago. The problem was, he thought, ‘that until we take definite action, the State Department does not take us seriously’. Bevin went on to argue that the deadlines were imposed by the dollar, and had been advanced earlier than expected because Truman had lifted controls on the dollar, leading to a 40 percent reduction in its value. This went against pledges made when the loan was negotiated and seriously reduced the actual value of the loan and therefore the time it lasted. The British need for interim aid to keep it going between the imminent exhaustion of the loan and the implementation of Marshall Aid had become acute.<sup>44</sup> Bevin

added that Britain had been in Greece for three years, when it had originally intended only to be there a few months. Warming to his criticism, he added,

...when we went in there, we received no support from the U.S. and certainly no kind words from them. We were tilted at and pulled to pieces in the U.S. on all sides.

The rant continued. It must be made clear, he argued, that ‘we do nothing under Left-Wing pressure. HMG [His Majesty’s Government] does not conduct their policy under pressure from any particular section or pressure group.’<sup>45</sup> As in March, he made a gibe at the lack of American actions to back their words, in pointing out that US demobilisation had been ‘infinitely greater’ than that of the British, when their relative populations, financial position and responsibilities were taken into account. He ended with a further criticism of the Americans for failing to support Britain with regard to the retention of its garrison in Egypt.

The note of his views concluded on a typical note:

As regards resistance to Communism, the Secretary of State feels that no one – and certainly no U. S. statesman – has shown as firm and as consistent resistance to Communism as he has himself.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, the letter was not sent. Inverchapel was in England, and Bevin was persuaded by his officials that the ambassador could convey his views to Balfour in person.<sup>47</sup>

In the months that followed, the embassy continued to report such views as characteristic of American opinion. In September, Bevin made an off-the-cuff suggestion that again revealed his inner sense of impatience with American policy. He proposed that a release of gold from Fort Knox would at one stroke address the financial crisis. American opinion did not take kindly to this remark. In November the head of the British Information Service in Washington, Bill Edwards, again launched a stinging attack on ‘deadlinitis’. The

embassy staff were in fact caught between a rock and a hard place.<sup>48</sup> They had been encouraged by the FO in the belief that their prime task was the positive projection of Britain. To do this, they had identified certain key themes that would play well with American officials, Congressmen, journalists and public opinion. They would emphasise continually that Labour reforms had left 80 percent of the British economy in private hands, that the Crossmanite rebels were unrepresentative, that the British empire was reforming in a progressive direction, and most importantly that Britain was a strong-willed and reliable partner in the conflict with Soviet-backed communism.<sup>49</sup> This projection strategy was complicated by the main outcome desired in Whitehall during 1947, which was American financial help. Emphasising the strength of Bevin and Attlee's anti-communism helped, but the embassy accurately perceived American (especially congressional) misgivings about giving aid to Britain. Americans did not like to feel they were sponsoring state socialism, but more important than that – and this was harder to combat – was the distaste at helping out a lame duck. Comments like Bevin's Fort Knox proposal only served to reinforce the idea that Britain expected a handout.<sup>50</sup> It was believed to be vital to demonstrate that Britain was a going concern, working flat out to solve its own problems, and determined to do so. But at the same time Americans needed to be impressed with Britain's urgent need for help. It was a fine line to walk.

Bevin's personal tendency was to emphasise that Britain's problems derived from past American actions. This was not seen in the embassy or the FO to be a very fruitful line of argument to pursue. But the embassy's failure to place the blame on the US brought down Bevinian complaints that they were not being robust enough in answering American criticisms. It was the embassy's job to report American attitudes – but when they did so, Bevin reacted as if to report them was to endorse them. To a degree, there was some truth in this, in particular with regard to the issue of 'deadlinitis', a characterisation of British policy

with which the embassy clearly agreed. Bevin's reaction was to see the embassy as having 'gone native' and would not tolerate that. Bevin's style inclined towards the crudely direct: while he usually kept this in check when working with the FO, whose approach tended more to the suave, this instance is one example, fired by his frustration with the Americans, when he let his feelings show.

These expressions of Bevin's viewpoint produced a concrete result later in the year in changes to the staffing of the embassy in Washington. Cabinet frustrations had continued that the Americans did not realise that Britain needed interim aid to tide it over before Marshall Aid began. Envoys and missions were despatched to lobby in Washington, but the more the government sent, the more Whitehall continued to feel that the Americans did not understand – and once again, and certainly unfairly, the embassy was blamed. A jittery Whitehall simply would not take into account the rhythms of Washington politics. Statements by American officials like under-secretary of state Robert Lovett, that Europeans needed to sacrifice some of their customs and traditions if they were to deserve American aid, did not help.<sup>51</sup> When Sir Stafford Cripps suggested sending a minister out to explain the situation, Bevin resisted this intrusion into his bailiwick, but then sent off instructions to Inverchapel full of implied criticism of the embassy's failure to tell the Americans straight what they needed to do:<sup>52</sup>

Things are getting pretty tough here... I want you to be fully in the picture of all our difficulties and plans here and of our determination to win through. Then you can go in with a fighting spirit and push our various requirements with maximum effort.<sup>53</sup>

Bevin, for all the information he received from the embassy about domestic attitudes and political processes in the United States, showed little understanding of the way that

things worked in Washington. Thus, at this point, as on the occasions earlier in the year noted in this paper, at heart his attitude was that the Americans needed to be shown in stark fashion that Britain was not responsible for its economic and financial plight, the Americans were. He was frustrated when he felt that this message was not being put across in the clear and unequivocal manner that he himself had expressed it. He plainly did not see that when he had tried to do so, as in his ill-conceived suggestion about the Fort Knox gold, it had had quite the opposite effect to the one intended.

As it turned out, Inverchapel, Sir Oliver Franks, who was heading a mission from the Committee on European Economic Cooperation, and the others actually in Washington were proved correct. Working at a pace determined by the political situation, Congress, called into special session by Truman, did start to address the problem in a helpful manner. However, Bevin remained dissatisfied with the messenger, and, concurring with the view of officials that the embassy was out of touch with the situation in Britain, he decided that Inverchapel should be replaced. Ironically, Bevin's choice of successor was Franks, who had shared the embassy's belief that Whitehall was panicking.<sup>54</sup> Once again, however, Bevin had acted on the idea that American views were unreasonable and that robust rebuttal was the way to change them.

### *Conclusion*

Bevin's forceful communications to the British embassy in Washington during 1947 offer a window into his inner thoughts. His frustration with the Americans is very evident, and shows Bevin to be by no means coldly pragmatic, nor a puppet in the hands of his Foreign Office officials. While they echo remarks that had been heard from time to time from FO officials dating back as far as the 1920s, the evidence suggests that the focus and approach was expressive of Bevin's own attitudes, unmoderated by institutional axioms. Incorporating

these forceful expressions of opinion and pithy images modifies the picture of Bevin being single-mindedly in pursuit of the Anglo-American alliance, prepared to set much aside in return for 'standing close to America,' and in strong contradistinction to the left-wing critics of the United States within the Labour Party. They usefully demonstrate a certain cultural distance between Bevin and his officials, which the nature of much of the documentary record of British policy formulation can obscure. Bevin was not entirely comfortable with the approach the FO had evolved since 1944 of 'steering the unwieldy barge' of US foreign policy by getting close to US policy-makers.<sup>55</sup> Bevin preferred a more robust policy of standing up for British viewpoints, defending them rather than either apologising for them or modifying them to meet US domestic political sensitivities. The Labour left wing found him too subservient to the US and he strongly defended himself against that charge – while distancing himself from left critics of the US by avoiding endorsement of their anti-American rhetoric. However, in private, his views were not so distant from these critics as they appear.

This extended to the contentious issue of his attitude to the concept of a Third Force. Bevin strongly asserted Britain's status as a Great Power.<sup>56</sup> It has been shown that while . Attlee and Bevin's conception of the Third Force stressed its anti-totalitarian aspect stronger than did that of the left, making the US a closer partner for it than the USSR could be, they continued through 1947 to cherish ideas that Britain's power-base could be based on the 'middle of the planet' independent of both the US and the USSR.<sup>57</sup> Bevin's views as explored here do, however, show how he felt that the Americans should acknowledge Britain's right to this independent status and to accept the way that it had been compromised by their own economic policies: Britain's sacrifices in the common cause justified their modifying these policies and in effect underwriting Britain's independence without undermining it.

Thus, for the crucial year of 1947, a synthesis of traditional and revisionist views on Bevin is most appropriate. Bevin indeed sought to call in the New World to revive the Old, but he saw distinct limits to the price that should be paid by Britain for that aid – indeed, to him, much of the payment had already been rendered in advance. The revisionists' Bevin, a domineering personality with an egotistical reaction to opposing viewpoints, rather than a calm, pragmatic planner, is in evidence here.

Recognising Bevin's frustrations with the Americans also provides a fuller understanding of his pleas to them to become more involved in Western European security after the final Council of Foreign Ministers broke down in December 1947. He continued to reiterate his theme that the Americans must be brought to face their responsibilities – for instance in discussion with French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault at the time they signed the Brussels Treaty in March 1948.<sup>58</sup> The views noted here suggest that he did not simply mean that the Americans should take over British responsibilities, or under-write the British empire, or adopt British strategic thinking. His view, as he wrote forcefully to Inverchapel, was that the Americans had been acting irresponsibly and this had been the root of many of Britain's post-war problems. Getting restitution for this was not only a matter of a certain justice, but might also ease Britain's problems so that she would cease to be so dependant on the United States. The special relationship as developed by Bevin was thus supposed to preserve British independence, not compromise it – even to allow, eventually, for the creation of the Third Force. Bevin was undoubtedly, along with Winston Churchill, one of the architects of the Anglo-American special relationship, but there was a clear contrast between Bevin's views of the relationship and Churchill's uncritical, even romanticised, approach to Britain's ally.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> F. K. Roberts, 'Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary', in *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government, 1945-51*, ed. Ritchie Ovendale (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984): 29. Roberts served as Bevin's private secretary in the FO in 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary, 1945-51* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), especially 102-3; Ritchie Ovendale, *The English Speaking Alliance: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Cold War 1945-51* (London; Unwin, 1985); Richard Best, 'Co-operation with Like-Minded Peoples'. *British Influences on American Security Policy, 1945-1949* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986). John Baylis rejects the idea of a grand design as such, but praises Bevin's flexibility and pragmatism in achieving his goal of Anglo-American alliance, John Baylis, 'Britain, the Brussels Pact, and the Continental Commitment,' *International Affairs*, 60 (1984): 628-9.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Weiler, *Ernest Bevin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993): 145-6; Raymond Smith, 'A Climate of Opinion. British Officials and the Development of British Soviet Policy,' *International Affairs* 64 (1988), 646-7; John Savile, *The Politics of Continuity* (New York: Verso, 1993); Peter Weiler, 'Britain and the First Cold War: Revisionist Beginnings', *Twentieth Century British History* 9 (1998): 131; Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace. Britain, the Division of Germany, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 78.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Weiler, *British Labour and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988): 194; F. M. Leventhal review of Weiler, *Bevin* in *American Historical Review* 99 (1994): 1696.

<sup>5</sup> Weiler, *Bevin*: 182, 185, 187.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Smith and John Zametica, 'The Cold Warrior. Clement Attlee Reconsidered, 1945-7', *International Affairs*, 61 (1985): 237-52.

<sup>7</sup> John Kent and John W. Young, 'British Policy Overseas: The 'Third Force' and the Origins of NATO – in Search of a New Perspective,' in *Securing Peace in Europe, 1945-62*, ed. B. Heuser & R. O'Neill (London: Macmillan, 1992): 41-6; John Kent, 'Bevin's Imperialism and the Idea of Euro-Africa, 1945-49' in *British Foreign Policy 1945-56*, ed. Michael Dockrill and John W. Young (London: Macmillan, 1989): 47-8, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Weiler, 'Britain and the First Cold War': 135.

<sup>9</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*: 75, 840; John W. Young, *Britain, France and the Unity of Europe* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984): 14; Jan Melissen and Bert Zeeman, 'Britain and Western Europe, 1945-51: Opportunities Lost?', *International Affairs*, 63 (1987): 87.



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<sup>10</sup> Denis MacShane, review of Weiler, *Ernest Bevin*, in *Albion* 26 (1994): 208. Weiler does not actually go that far as to say this in the book under review.

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Warner, 'Ernest Bevin and British Foreign Policy, 1945-1951', in *The Diplomats*, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Lowenheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994): 128-9.

<sup>12</sup> Sean Greenwood, *Titan at the Foreign Office. Gladwyn Jebb and the Shaping of the Modern World* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2008): 215. Knight notes that Bevin's speech at the Labour Party conference in Margate on 29 May 1947 was the definitive answer to the Third Force advocates, W. Knight, 'Labourite Britain: America's 'Sure Friend'? The Anglo-Soviet Treaty Issue, 1947', *Diplomatic History* 7 (1983): 279-281.

<sup>13</sup> Weiler, *Bevin*: 146; Anthony Adamthwaite, 'Britain and the World, 1945-1949: the View from the Foreign Office', *International Affairs* 61 (1985): 224-25.

<sup>14</sup> When Bevin took office, the permanent under-secretary at the FO, Sir Alexander Cadogan noted in his diary, 'He's the heavyweight of the Cabinet and will get his own way with them, so if he can be put on the right line that may be all right,' diary 28 July 1945, Churchill Centre archives, Churchill College, Cambridge.

Conversely, Hugh Dalton believed that the two senior FO officials, Cadogan and Sir Orme Sargent expected Bevin to replace them, but he did not know the FO's staff well enough to know who to put in their place, diary 25 February 1946, Dalton papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science.

<sup>15</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*: 339.

<sup>16</sup> For an example of Bevin urging a positive public reference to the United States, see his note on draft speech by Sir Hartley Shawcross, 5 February 1947 Foreign Office papers FO371/61071/AN771. All documents cited in this article are from the British National Archives, Kew, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>17</sup> Bevin had noted on 7 Sept. 1946, with regard to Byrnes's vagueness over one issue, 'I cannot go on piecemeal like this. USA must tell us what their policy is.' FO800/513; Alan Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 92.

<sup>18</sup> Attlee memorandum 5 Jan. 1947, Bevin to Attlee 9 Jan. 1947 FO800/476.

<sup>19</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*: 350.

<sup>20</sup> For the treaty, see Bert Zeeman, 'Britain and the Cold War: An Alternative Approach. The Treaty of Dunkirk Example', *European History Quarterly* 16 (1986): 350-8 and Martin A. L. Longden, 'From "Hot War" to "Cold War": Western Europe in British Grand Strategy, 1945-1948' in ed. M. Hopkins, Michael Kandiah and Gillian Staerck, *Cold War Britain, 1945-1964 New Perspectives* (London: Palgrave, 2003): 115-6.

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership. Britain and America 1944-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981): 298-9.

<sup>22</sup> Dalton described the loan as having ‘strings so tight that they might strangle our trade and indeed our whole economic life.’ Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After: Memoirs, 1945-1960* (London: Frederick Muller, 1960): 75. Bevin disliked the terms imposed, though he publicly welcomed the loan, Richard Toye, “The Labour Party’s External Economic Policy in the 1940s”, *Historical Journal* 43 (2000): 210.

<sup>23</sup> Inverchapel private letter to Bevin 15 June 1946, Bevin letter to Inverchapel 25 July 1946 FO800/513. Bevin wrote, ‘In the carrying out of foreign policy I do not believe this method of exhibitionism has any effect at all.’

<sup>24</sup> Michael Hopkins, “The Washington Embassy: The Role of an Institution in Anglo-American Relations, 1945-55”, in, *Intelligence, Defence and Diplomacy: British Policy in the Post-war World*, ed. R. Aldrich and M. Hopkins (London: Frank Cass, 1994): 89-90.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Nunn May was a British scientist who had been working in Canada on the wartime atomic bomb project, and who had been revealed to be passing secrets to the USSR after the defection of Igor Gouzenko in September 1945. He was arrested in March 1946.

<sup>26</sup> For American concerns, see Gallman to State Department, 18 Nov. 1946 Record Group 59, 741.00/11-1846 United States National Archives, Washington, DC., and Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking, 1951), entry for 25 Nov. 1946. For Crossman, see Bullock, *Bevin*: 75, 327-30, 395-8; Peter Jones, *America and the British Labour Party. The ‘Special Relationship’ at Work* (London: Tauris, 1997): 47-48; Michael Hopkins, ‘Herbert Morrison, the Cold War and Anglo-American Relations, 1945-1951’, in Hopkins, Kandiah and Staerck, *Cold War Britain*: 20-23. 22 Labour MPs, including future prime minister James Callaghan, wrote a letter to Attlee, pressing for better relations with the Soviet Union and for Britain to distance itself from American anti-communism, demanding instead a ‘genuine middle way.’, letter 29 Oct. 1946 FO371/56764/N14755; Terry H. Anderson, *The United States, Britain, and the Cold War, 1944-1947* (University of Missouri Press: Columbia MO: 1981): 158.

<sup>27</sup> Inverchapel letter to Attlee 10 March 1947 Prime Minister papers PREM8/703. For the background to the issue of Greece and Turkey, see Robert Frazier, “Did Britain Start the Cold War? Bevin and the Truman Doctrine”, *Historical Journal* 27 (1984): 715-27.

<sup>28</sup> Attlee wrote, ‘There is rather a feeling here that the Americans, while quite willing to shelter themselves behind us and expect us to pull chestnuts out of the fire for them, are unwilling to give us real assistance. In particular there is a good deal of comment on the fact that we are expected to keep our troops abroad in all

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kinds of places, whereas the United States of America contributes very little in this way.’ He went on, to criticise the ‘light-hearted manner’ in which the Americans made the situation worse in Palestine, without taking real responsibility. All this, he wrote, ‘leads to a feeling that there is a danger of our being placed in the position of a mere breakwater between the United States and Russia – hence a good deal of Left Wing criticism’, Attlee letter to Inverchapel 23 March 1947 PREM8/703.

<sup>29</sup> Maurice Peterson, British Ambassador in Moscow, wrote that Marshall began uncertainly and ‘seemed very wobbly.’ He thought, though, that Bevin greatly preferred him to Byrnes, Peterson to Sargent 26 March 1947. Oliver Harvey noted on 1 April that Marshall had ‘come on a lot in the last ten days, and I think now he and the Secretary of State understand each other very well.’ Harvey to Sargent 1 April 1947 FO800/272.

<sup>30</sup> Sean Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War 1945-91* (London: Macmillan, 2000): 41-2.

<sup>31</sup> Francis Williams, *Ernest Bevin* (Hutchinson; London, 1952): 263-4.

<sup>32</sup> Conversely, in February 1947 Bevin had emphasised the need to avoid giving the impression of making further demands on America charity, Bevin to Inverchapel 3 Feb. 1947 FO800/514.

<sup>33</sup> Bevin letter to Inverchapel 17 March 1947 PREM8/703. For Bevin’s reaction to the Truman speech (like the FO, he regretted the universalism and the wisdom of saying this in public while the Council of Foreign Ministers was in session) see Bullock, *Bevin*: 379.

<sup>34</sup> He did note to Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that he had discussed Britain’s financial situation on two occasions with Marshall, Bevin to Dalton 24 April 1947 FO800/514.

<sup>35</sup> Bevin to Attlee 16 April 1947 FO800/272.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Frazier, *Anglo-American Relations with Greece: the Coming of the Cold War 1942-47* (London: Macmillan, 1991): 145-6, 152, 175. While in Moscow, Bevin attempted, unsuccessfully, to persuade Marshall that the US should pay for the cost of the British army and navy missions in Greece.

<sup>37</sup> Greatest praise for Bevin in the orthodox account is reserved for his part in the genesis of Marshall Aid. According to this view, he alone recognised the opening offered by Marshall’s speech, and acted speedily and decisively to create a European plan that the Americans, as Marshall had signalled, could then respond to. Actually, Bevin was already proposing to raise the issue of American aid through Will Clayton, who was expected to arrive in Britain shortly, and noted that Marshall’s proposal cut across what he was planning. Far from immediately seizing the initiative, the British then paused, waiting for more information from Washington and in particular waiting for Clayton. It was when it was clear that his visit would be delayed, and also that French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault was going to seize the initiative and respond to Marshall,

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that Bevin then became more active. Bullock, *Bevin*: 404; Martin H. Folly, 'Lord Inverchapel', in *The Washington Embassy. British Ambassadors to the United States, 1939-77*, ed. Michael F. Hopkins, Saul Kelly and John W. Young, (London: Palgrave, 2009): 59-61. Wilson-Young minute 10 June 1947 FO371/61028/AN1987; McNeil to Bevin 11 June 1947 FO371/62398/UE4614; Makins minute 21 June 1947 FO371/62400/UE4863. Alan Milward noted in 1984 that the idea that Bevin should take all the credit for Marshall Aid is an 'agreeable myth,' A. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 61 note 6.

<sup>38</sup> Bevin remarks at GEN179 committee 3rd meeting 13 June 1947 PREM8/495.

<sup>39</sup> Weiler, *Bevin*: 166-8: the talks with Clayton eventually took place on 24 June, and proved frustrating.

<sup>40</sup> Frazier sees this dispute as one of the most serious in Anglo-American relations in this period, and characterises Bevin as attempting to use the issue to get more from the US on other issues, Frazier, *Anglo-American Relations*, 166.

<sup>41</sup> Balfour to Wright 8 Aug. 1947 FO371/61003/AN2922.

<sup>42</sup> Bevin hand-written note on Balfour letter to Wright 8 Aug. 1947 FO371/61003/AN2922.

<sup>43</sup> Bevin conversations with Douglas 31 July and 2 Aug. 1947 FO800/514. Bevin was quite a vigorous propagator of the idea that he responded to Marshall's speech quickly and decisively, for which see note 36.

<sup>44</sup> George C. Peden, "Economic Aspects of British Perceptions of Power on the Eve of the Cold War", *Power in Europe? Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany in a Post War World 1945-1950*, in ed. Josef Becker & Franz Knipping (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986): 251-2.

<sup>45</sup> Balfour's interpretation of US views was percipient: Marshall complained to Robert Lovett later that month that Britain was 'showing a stubborn insistence on avoiding the garden path to wander in the thicket of purely local Labour Party misadventures.' He went on to express the 'deadlinitis' criticism that Britain was too 'free-handed' in 'passing the buck of the international dilemma' to the US, Marshall to Lovett 25 Aug. 1947 *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1947, vol. 5: 313.

<sup>46</sup> Henniker minute of Bevin views for despatch to Balfour, 19 Aug. 1947 FO371/61003/AN2922. This is reprinted in John Baylis, *Anglo-American relations since 1939: The Enduring Alliance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997): 47-9.

<sup>47</sup> Bevin's comments show a considerable impatience with American views, and appear to extend his frustration to the embassy – the unfairness of this is perhaps reflected in the fact that Balfour was actually responding to being told by Sargent that these sudden announcements were deliberate tactics by ministers to bring home to

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the US government and public how serious Britain's situation was – a tactic that cut across the long-established information policy line followed by the embassy since before Inverchapel arrived, Balfour to FO 31 July 1947, Sargent to Balfour 6 Aug. 1947 FO371/61003/AN2922.

<sup>48</sup> Edwards memorandum 5 Nov. 1947 FO371/61004/AN4001. Edwards, like Balfour earlier, criticised 'deadlinitis' in Whitehall as a cause of problems with the Americans, particularly loss of prestige. There is other evidence of dissonance between the embassy and Whitehall: Sir John Magowan, the embassy's economic expert, complained of being kept in the dark as to expectations in London, Magowan to Hall-Patch 22 Sept. 1947 FO371/62671/UE9193, while in November the FO was finding Oliver Franks (in Washington at the time), Inverchapel and Magowan 'badly out of date', R W B Clarke minute on Inverchapel to FO 7 Nov. 1947 FO371/62683/UE10839.

<sup>49</sup> Caroline Anstey, 'The Projection of British Socialism: Foreign Office Publicity and American Opinion, 1945-50', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19 (1984): 431, 436-7.

<sup>50</sup> The embassy noted on 13 September that Britain was still regarded as looking for an easy way out of its economic problems. This was blamed on a nationalisation programme that American opinion saw to be strangled in red tape, while workers were coddled. Bevin was seen as the most redoubtable British figure after Churchill in American eyes and so they were disappointed at his references to the Fort Knox gold, and also some remarks made to visiting American Legionnaires regarding the need for a 'food Lend-Lease', Weekly Political Summary 13 Sept. 1947 FO371/61056/AN3199.

<sup>51</sup> Franks to FO 31 Oct. 1947 FO371/62674/UE10534.

<sup>52</sup> Cripps to Bevin 29 Oct. 1947 FO800/514. Bevin had ruled against a ministerial visit at a meeting on 23 Oct., Makins minute FO371/62362/UE10340. Sir Edmund Hall-Patch, an influential under-secretary at the FO, who liaised closely with the Treasury, asserted that for months there had been concern that the full facts about Britain's difficulties had not been appreciated by the Americans, Hall-Patch minute 29 Oct. 1947 FO371/62362/UE10294

<sup>53</sup> Bevin to Inverchapel 30 Oct. 1947 FO800/514.

<sup>54</sup> Inverchapel and Franks argued that the Americans were fully informed – the administration had a 'sympathetic and reasonably accurate view of our overall difficulties and plans' – and American officials were very busy, Inverchapel to Bevin 27 Oct. 1947 FO371/62362/UE10294.

<sup>55</sup> Steve Marsh and John Baylis, 'The Anglo-American "Special Relationship": The Lazarus of International Relations,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 17 (2006)::176-7.

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<sup>56</sup> For instance, Bevin speech to House of Commons, 16 May 1947, Parliamentary Debates (*Hansard*) 5th Series, vol. 437, col. 1965.

<sup>57</sup> Jones, *America and British Labour*: 49.

<sup>58</sup> Bevin conversation with Bidault on train to Brussels, 17 March 1948 FO800/460