much of the time, Churchill would not have distinguished between the two: yet there is evidence that at times he did so—

All this notwithstanding, his attitudes towards the Soviet Union, even if it was the fountainhead of Bolshevism, were clearly changeable according to the developments of international politics, and to this extent it is clear that he regarded the Soviet leadership in a sense as realists. He had, in fact, had no contact with that leadership, with the exception of his informal contacts with Maisky before the war. He had said little about Stalin himself, who simply represented the grim, dark figure at the centre of the Bolshevik menace. This position was to continue during the first year of his premiership. He sent only two messages to Stalin, neither of which received a reply. The first was an appeal to Soviet realism, by setting out the situation resulting from German victories in the West, and inviting Stalin to consider their impact on Soviet interests. It was intended to gain Sir Stafford Cripps, the new ambassador to Moscow, a meeting with Stalin. It achieved this, only to prompt from Stalin comments to Cripps that discouraged any further contacts by apparently aligning himself with those who sought to alter the "old equilibrium" in Europe.[13]

Churchill, however, continued to see Stalin as essentially a realist, and it was as a result of this assumption that his second message was sent, in April 1941. Again it was a short, deliberately matter-of-fact message, in which Churchill, in suitably disguised form, informed Stalin of intelligence that he had gained from Ultra decrypts, pointing to a German military build-up, preparatory to an attack on the Soviet Union.[14] The messa Tc 0. (-)Tj Tm Uloa

commenting to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden that it was best to let the Soviets draw their own conclusions from the facts, rather than run after them with "frantic efforts to assure them of your love."[16]

This attitude was generally to continue to characterise Churchill's attitude towards his new ally for the first twelve months after the German attack on the Soviet Union. When signals intelligence made it clear that Germany was going to attack the Soviet Union in June 1941, there was debate within the British Government as to whether to welcome the USSR as an ally. While there was never any consideration of following the course that some conservative revisionists have suggested would have been wise—of coming to terms with Hitler now he was focused on the Soviets—there was a clear sense at that time that alliance with the Soviets was a matter of choice and was not simply dictated by the force of events.[17] While Eden offered Maisky the despatch of a military mission to Moscow, Churchill assured Roosevelt that there was no question of a close alliance. Eden and the Minister for Information, Alfred Duff Cooper, argued that fifty per cent of British public opinion would be hostile to such an alliance.[18] Churchill, however, in his broadcast to the nation on the evening of the day that Germany attacked the Soviet Union, aligned Britain with the cause of a people he characterised as fighting for their own homes and their country. He referred to his attitudes towards Bolshevism and stood by them, but in resounding words declared them irrelevant, when the Soviets were engaged with Britain's enemy. He thus from the beginning finessed the problem of divided British opinion (which mostly split on class lines) by calling into being a comradeship-in-arms:

> No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have said about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding. The past with its crimes, its follies, its tragedies flashes away. I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold

with his own Chiefs of Staff, he warned Beaverbrook not to get carried away with the atmosphere in Moscow and allow Britain to be "bled white."[22] In the weeks following that meeting, Stalin criticised the British for failing to come to Soviet assistance, for failing to declare war on the Axis satellites, and for failing to answer the Soviet request for Bri

offensive, which had produced prematurely optimistic public statements by Stalin, had run out of momentum, but it m

A final element might have been pique with the Americans: the State Department had been very dismissive of the FO's views on the frontiers, and were clearly suspicious that British policy still inclined naturally towards appeasement (this time of the Soviets). Even worse, Roosevelt had weighed in with the comment that Stalin distrusted the British, but liked him better, so perhaps things could be settled between the two of them.[37] Despite his determination to be the best of friends with Roosevelt, Churchill was not prepared to concede to him the leadership in Allied-Soviet relations, and Roosevelt's attitude may well have strengthened Churchill's readiness to seize the initiative, in order to achieve a closer Anglo-Soviet relationship. Roosevelt's evident intention, not only to forge a personal relationship with Stalin, but also to speak for the British as well, certainly seems to have struck Churchill, for even though he had indicated to the War Cabinet on 16 March that he agreed with Roosevelt, he made his own bid to play that role when he asked Maisky whether Stalin would welcome a visit from himself.[38] He was thinking of somewhere like Baku or Astrakhan. Maisky thought Stalin would come and meet him, but the idea was not taken further until the end of July 1942.

By then, the nascent alliance had been formally established in the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, though without an agreement on frontiers. Molotov had come to London and had agreed to a twenty-year treaty of co-operation in place of an overtly political arrangement, but he thought he had secured what the Soviets primarily wanted: a promise from Roosevelt of a second front in 1942. Churchill had been at pains to point out to him that no promise had been made, only a statement that they would urgently investigate the

decision coincided unfortunately with the disaster of PQ17, the latest Anglo-American convoy bringing supplies to the USSR, which left Iceland on 27 June. Fearing attack by the German battleship *Tirpitz*, the Royal Navy escort had been withdrawn, and the ships ordered to proceed independently. German submarines and aircraft took a terrible toll; only nine out of thirty-four reached Soviet ports. Churchill's first response was to cancel any further such convoys until the end of the year. Moreover, the German offensive had

replaced Cripps in Moscow in March 1942, wrote of his concern at Soviet reactions to the news concerning the second front and the convoys. Clark Kerr was an eccentric and unconventional diplomat, who attached great importance to personal interactions and emotional responses. Unlike Cripps, he had got on well in his first meeting with Stalin (the political situation having changed greatly) and felt that in a similar face-to-face meeting, Churchill would be able to impress Stalin with his fighting spirit and thereby modify the impression given by the recent decisions that the British were not prepared to engage the enemy to help the Soviets.[43] He suggested that Molotov might well have failed to convey this fighting spirit when he reported back to Stalin after his London mission. Clark Kerr suggested that a personal visit was the only way to explain the second front decision to Stalin, and thought it would be beneficial for the alliance as a whole for the two men finally to meet each other. Eden showed the telegram to Churchill, who was immediately taken with the idea and resolved to go on from Egypt to meet Stalin.[44]

Churchill wired to Stalin:

> We could survey the war together and take decisions hand-in-hand. I could then tell you plans we have made with President Roosevelt for offensive action in 1942.[45]

to have been little more than this hope. There were no preparatory briefs from either the Foreign Office or the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Beaverbrook and another close Churchill confidant, Brendan Bracken, newly appointed Minister of Information, both wanted to go, probably to increase their standing with the British public. On advice from Eden, Churchill did not take them, but he did not take Eden either—only Cadogan from

your idea is sound and I am telling Stalin Harriman will be at his disposal to help in any way."[52]

On 7 August, Ivan Maisky set out for Stalin what he thought were the reasons for Churchill's wish to meet him. He saw three main objectives in Churchill's mind, and allowing for Maisky's ideological bias and his need to keep in step with the views of his leader, he was strikingly perceptive. He saw one reason to be the need to deflect public and parliamentary criticism about the lack of military operations in support of the Soviets. Another, which he saw to be a significant factor, was Churchill's desire to formulate a unified strategy, and, interestingly, Maisky noted that Churchill "wants to serve as a link between the United States and the Soviet Union in this respect." Maisky thought that "Churchill has set himself the task of establishing a close personal contact with Comrade Stalin, somehow dovetailing Anglo-American strategic plans with Soviet plans." Maisky believed Churchill's third objective to be the avoidance of a second front, at least partly because he believed the British army was not up to it. He predicted that Churchill would present other and "less daunting" ways of helping the Soviet Union, such as strategic bombing, and joint operations in the North. Maisky suggested using the meeting to press for more supplies, if a second front was not going to materialise, and to start to forge a unified allied strategy. Maisky's message, only recently available, sheds interesting light not only on Churchill, but also on Stalin's conduct of their meetings.[53]

Now accompanied by his rather lightweight team of Harriman, Cadogan, Air Marshal Tedder of the Desert Air Force and Generals Brooke and Wavell, Churchill set off for Moscow via Teheran, arriving, with only his entourage and Harriman, on 12 August.[54] Churchill's first meeting took place with Stalin later that day. It was a small-scale, intimate affair, with Churchill accompanied only by Clark Kerr, Harriman and the embassy interpreter, Charles Dunlop.[55] For such an important meeting, Churchill had

representatives that Stalin was a peasant whom he knew how to handle. Too late did Air Marshal Arthur Tedder warn of the likelihood that the *dacha* was bugged.[60]

Whether such eavesdropping had an effect on Soviet attitudes is unclear, but certainly the mood had changed by the next day, and an issue Churchill thought had been resolved was revealed to be very much still in dispute. Warning signs were evident in the morning when Molotov observed to Churchill that there was no certainty the North African operation would go ahead—after all, the second front was not going to, despite Roosevelt's statement in June that it would.[61] This was just a prelude to the storm that Stalin unleashed later. He presented a memorandum criticising not only the decision not to open a second front, but also the delivery of equipment to the Red Army and its quality. He then released a stream of invective at Churchill, accusing the British Army and Navy of cowardice, and the Allies of breaking faith and of failing to acknowledge the significance of the Soviet struggle. According to Colonel Ian Jacob, who took the minutes for the British, the effect of this was made even worse by the crude English of Vladimir Pavlov, Stalin's interpreter. These official minutes do not convey the full flavour of the meeting in the same way that Clark Kerr's more impressionistic (and less professional) account of the first meeting had done, but even so, some idea of Stalin's bitterness comes across:

> M. STALIN suggested that higher sacrifices were called for. Ten thousand men a day were being sacrificed on the Russian front.… The Russians did not complain of the sacrifices they were making, but the extent of them should be recognised.
> MR. CHURCHILL said that he envied the Russians their glory, and he hoped that we very soon would show by our deeds that the Democracies were neither sluggish nor cowardly and were just as ready as the Russians to shed blood…. The existence of the oceans and the need to move over them in ships were facts for which it hardly seemed right that we should be reproached.
>
> He earnestly desired to hear the ring of comradeship in the discussions. He well knew what the Russians were

going through: we ourselves had fought alone for a year….
He had come a long way in the hope that he would receive
the hand of comradeship and that he would be believed in a
spirit of loyalty and friendship…. It grieved his heart that

might still have a chance of diverting the attack from North Africa to Europe.[65] There is also the possibility, in view of what Maisky had written on 7 August, that Stalin was attempting, extremely crudely, to talk Churchill out of his fear of pitting the British army against the Germans: Maisky's report to Stalin of Churchill's attitude gives an extra layer of meaning to Stalin's remark about it not being hard to fight the Germans once you got started—it may not have been meant as an insult, but as an encouragement, but this was lost in the inadequacies of translation. Whatever Stalin's motivation, all it did was draw forth a bullish response from Churchill, who, like Stalin, dropped diplomatic form and delivered an eloquent and rhetorical speech. He said that he had come to try and establish real comradeship, only for his motives and sincerity to be questioned: there was no "ring of comradeship" in Stalin's attitude. Dunlop, the interpreter, proved as inadequate for the task as Pavlov had been, and stumbled in translating Churchill's words (though in his defence, Churchill tended to take little account of the needs of the translator once he had launched into full-blown rhetoric). At one point, according to Jacob's later recollections, Stalin stopped Churchill and said that he did not understand the words but admired the fighting spirit evident in Churchill's tone. Both men having vented their spleen, though through inadequate interpretation, the mood calmed a little. The discussion shifted to the situation in the Caucasus and Stalin offered the British soldiers who were present a demonstration of the *Katyusha* rocket launcher.[66]

During the meeting, Harriman had passed Churchill a note that a similar change in mood had been evident in the second meeting with Stalin in October 1941, implying that this may have been either a tactic, or a result of pressure from behind the scenes.[67] This suggestion did not mollify Churchill, however, and he came away from the meeting deeply disgruntled. He was inclined not to attend the state dinner, since Stalin had been

so offensive. When Clark Kerr called at the *dacha* the following morning, he found Churchill to be like a

> wounded lion. He declaimed against Stalin in ponderous Gibbonesque periods…. He declared he was damned if he would keep his engagement to dine with Stalin tonight.[68]

His method of handling Stalin had failed, but once again his lack of diplomatic finesse may have saved the day. His mood would have been evident to any of the Soviet listeners of the goings-on at the *dacha*, and he made little attempt to hide it at the lavish Kremlin banquet given in his honour, which Churchill finally did grudgingly agree to attend. He chose, however to dress in his remarkable one-piece garment that was sometimes called his "siren suit." The Soviets, who were punctilious with regard to etiquette, were all, of course, in formal dress or uniform and must have been greatly taken aback, if not insulted. However, perhaps himself perceiving that his own tactics had gone awry, Stalin had reverted to his congenial *persona*, making toasts and sharing humorous remarks with his colleagues. For a time Churchill cheered up under Stalin's flattery, but the mood faded, when Churchill asked if he was forgiven for his past (meaning his efforts to defeat the Bolshevik revolution) and Stalin replied, "Who am I to forgive. Only God can forgive."[69] Stalin continued in party mood, but his *bonhomie* increasingly grated on Churchill. Stalin's habit of moving around the room to clink glasses with people he was toasting, and the restrictions of interpretation, magnified Churchill's grumpy mood. Though normally such lavish food and drink would have appealed to him, he now seemed to find it distasteful.[70] He perked up for a photograph session, but when Stalin suggested watching a film, Churchill abruptly took his leave. There is no evidence that this was a contrived tactic, but as a riposte to Stalin's own earlier demonstration of pique, it was an effective response. Stalin followed Churchill to the door, jogging to keep up; an unprecedented gesture from the *Vozhd'*, and probably a remarkable sight for onlookers.[71]

Back at the *dacha*, Churchill voiced his discontent eloquently, saying he would leave Stalin to fight his own battles. "I ought not to have come," he said, though he added that he might be able to work with "that man," but for the language barrier. But, he told Wilson, his doctor, he had deliberately said "Goodbye," not "Good evening," and said, "I am going to leave this man to fight his own battles."[72] According to Clark Kerr and Wilson, the mood was no better the following day. The ambassador has left a detailed account of his attempt to persuade Churchill to make one more effort to get on with Stalin (again confirming that this was one of the ostensible purposes of the mission). Clark Kerr's account of the conversation is typically colourful and cannot be verified, but there is no reason to doubt its general veracity.[73] According to the ambassador, he argued to Churchill that the Soviets were indeed rough and inexperienced, fresh from the plough or

at the military meetings, Major Arthur Birse.[75] Clark Kerr arrived after Jacob had left for a meeting, so it is possible that the ambassador gave parallel advice. He was encouraged to do so by Cadogan and by Wilson. So Jacob could have underestimated the continuing strength of Churchill's feelings. It is tempting to think that Churchill was making a show for the microphones, and did not seriously intend to leave without another attempt at winning Stalin over to his point of view. None of the accounts written at the time suggests this, but Cadogan had been involved in just such a ruse during Eden's visit in December. A Machiavellian tactic like this is somewhat out of keeping with the usual depiction of Churchill as rather an instinctive and emotional man, but Churchill, an immensely experienced politician, was quite capable of subterfuge.[76] It is perhaps suggestive that when Clark Kerr arrived to speak to him they went outside and walked in the garden, away from prying ears—even though it was an unsatisfactory place to hold a conversation because of the need to walk in single file. On the other hand, Clark Kerr clearly thought Churchill needed to be persuaded.[77]

The result was that Cadogan sought out Molotov to arrange a further meeting. He was stalled for hours: this seems to have been a deliberate Soviet ploy, for some time in the afternoon Stalin's daughter was told to prepare to have Churchill over for dinner—even though when the meeting was finally arranged there was no mention of dinner, and indeed Churchill made arrangements to dine with the Polish General Anders after he had spoken for an hour or so with Stalin. He left, however, with the parting words that he would not leave the Kremlin until Stalin was "in his pocket."[78]

As it happened, the meeting, as Stalin seems to have intended, lasted for over seven hours, from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m., even though neither man had any particular objective in mind. British accounts of the meeting are limited to those of Churchill himself and his new interpreter, Birse. Stalin once again turned on the charm. Both had made their points

in their earlier meetings, and now relaxed somewhat in each other's company. They had

There are also grounds for arguing that the Churchill-Stalin relationship remained full of suspicion.[88]

To leave it at that, however, may be to miss the more intangible, but perhaps significant, aspects of the meetings in Moscow. The objective was never to reach firm agreements on substantive matters, but to test whether the two leaders, and their two states, could find some common foundations on which to build an alliance and overcome the sense of disconnectedness between their various war efforts that had become evident in the light of recent events. Churchill and Stalin had found common ground in their own discussion of military matters, as evidenced in their discussion of the relative merits of Churchill's ancestor the Duke of Marlborough, and the Duke of Wellington, as military commanders.[89] In addition, and of some importance for Churchill, Stalin had seemed enthusiastic about Churchill's pet scheme of a joint invasion of North Norway, and agreed with him about the desirability of getting Turkey into the war (though not optimistic it could be achieved). In this sense, Churchill might well have felt that Stalin's views of future strategy were preferable to that of some of the Americans, hence his declaration of respect for Stalin's "sure-footed and quick military judgement" and his sense of achievement at the end of the mission.[90]

Churchill was not a naïve or simplistic statesman and, as with his personal relationship with Roosevelt, he remained aware that political differences had not been expunged by inter-personal cordiality. He had been trusting in his ability to win over a supposedly simple, peasant-minded, Soviet leader by strength of rhetoric. Stalin's refusal to be charmed left him without an alternative strategy. However, the final result, the last meeting when the air had been cleared and the reality of mutual need had dawned on both leaders, produced a long-lasting sense that at the heart of the impersonal, grim and ruthless Soviet state was a human figure who was capable of frankness and humour, and

who appeared in the last resort to attach importance to Churchill and his good opinion. He returned with an attitude to Stalin that was, if anything, more full of ambiguities than before, but one which, right to the end of the war, contained as one important element the sense that this was a man who could be dealt with. Churchill later said that if he could dine with Stalin once a week then all the difficulties would be capable of resolution.[91]

That Churchill regarded Stalin in such a positive light can partly be explained by the unexpected rapport of the final meeting, but it is also necessary to take into account the underlying purpose of the mission, which was rooted in the still embryonic nature of the Big Three relationship. As has been discussed above, the issue of the frontiers earlier in the year had quickly become overlaid with issues concerning how the partnership with the Soviets was to be managed, and who was best suited to lead it on the Anglo-American side. As Churchill's comments concerning "comradeship" demonstrate, getting to know Stalin was to all intents and purposes the aim of the trip. Given the news Churchill was bearing regarding the second front, the prospects were not good, but if successful, it would place Churchill in a position where Roosevelt could no longer claim that he had an advantage in relations with Stalin and should therefore make the running on behalf of the Anglo-American partnership. Coming so quickly after his June trip to Washington, BRACELET put Churchill in a good position to be the lynchpin or broker of the Grand Alliance. In Moscow, he had obtained a sympathetic audience, possibly even support, for his strategic vision for the pursuit of victory. If these were its aims, then the mission must be judged a success.

With regard to the meeting's impact on Stalin's attitudes, Clark Kerr concluded that Churchill by the force of his personality had dispelled the "long-standing and tenacious suspicions which have clouded the judgement of Stalin." He exaggerated: the conference clearly did not do that, but it may have been important in convincing Stalin

[10] Robert Boothby to Lloyd George, 18 September 1939, Lloyd George papers G/3/13, House of Lords Record Office; Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, vol. 6: Finest Hour* (London: Heinemann, 1983) 44, 49, 98, 100-101.
[11] Churchill radio broadcast, 1 October 1939, Winston Churchill, *Into Battle*

[28] Gorodetsky, *Stafford Cripps in Moscow*, 189-96, 205.
[29] Churchill to Attlee, 20 December 1941, while *en route* to the USA PREM 3/399; Churchill to Eden, 7 January 1942, PREM3/399, and 8 January 1942, FO371/32874/N108.
[30] War Cabinet meeting, 6 February 1942, WM(42)17th CAB65/29.
[31]

[63] Churchill to Attlee, 14 August 1942, FO800/300.
[64] Churchill to Attlee, 14 August 1942, PREM3/76A/9.
[65] Clark Kerr, BRACELET journal, 14 August 1942, FO800/300.
[66]