

THE ACCOMMODATION OF THE BRITISH MISSION IN ROMANIA (1944)

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(Abstract)

The Romanian Convention of Armistice, signed in Moscow on 12–13 September 1944, provided to the Soviet Union the right to represent all interests of the United Nations by ruling the Allied Control Commission on Romania, to which the United States and the United Kingdom representatives were attached.

British documents on microfiches, studied at the Romanian National Archives, provided a clear insight on the Romanian affairs approached by the Big Three Powers in the autumn of 1944.

One could easily notice the fact that not only did the Soviets interfere in Romanian affairs from the beginning but they also affected the rights, mainly economic, in Romania of all other states of the United Nations, the Great Britain and the United States especially.

After Churchill-Stalin's "Percentages Agreement", the Soviets, using false arguments, increased their purely unilateral activities, in disregard even of the 10% percent British, by removing British and American-owned oil concerns' equipment although His Majesty's Government and the United States Government made serious unsuccessful protests.

The United Kingdom succeeded in having the Office of Political Representatives, through which the Foreign Office was made known about the political developments with Romanian Government and Romanian patriots' help, who sincerely believed in the generous principles of the Atlantic Charter and the Declaration by the United Nations.

Stalin pursued his aim to Communize Romania and in May 1944 Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary, and Fedor Tarasovich Gusev, Soviet Ambassador in the United Kingdom, agreed the Soviet Union would become the state who would apply the interests of the United Nations in Romania, while the Great Britain would do the same in Greece; wishing to change the agreement and meeting difficulties, Cordell Hull, U.S. State Secretary, succeeded only to get assurances of the limited period of this agreement, during the war¹.

The study was based on Foreign Office microfiches that were analysed at the Romanian National

Archives. British (Military) Mission (also called "British Section" or "British Element") reported to War Office, but in most cases War Office sent copies to Foreign Office; the British Political Representative in Romania was a diplomat and reported to the Foreign Office.

While the Romanian Delegation was in Moscow for the conclusion of the Armistice, Foreign Office recommended to Archibald Clark Kerr, British Ambassador in the Soviet Union, to inquire Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, about the relations amongst the Allied Representatives in Romania, specifically their wish to send a diplomat as Political Representative. According to Molotov, it was not the proper time for a Political Representative². In Romania, the key-role

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¹ Harry Hanak, "The Politics of Impotence: The British observe Romania 6 March 1945 to 30 December 1947," in *Românii în istoria universală*, vol. III₁, ed. I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu, V. Cristian, (Iași, 1988), 427; Joseph F. Harrington, Bruce J. Courtney, *Relații româno-americane (1940–1990)*, Traducere de Mihaela Sadovschi, Prefață de V. Fl. Dobrinescu și Kurt W. Treptow (Iași: Institutul European, 2002), 35–36.

² Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1944, Vol. IV, Europe, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1966, Harriman's telegram of 6.09.1944 to U.S. Secretary of State, 223–224

belonged to the Soviets as the Soviet Representative coordinated the “efficient executive machinery” and “control over execution of all armistice terms which deals with measures of a military and non-military nature”, while the British and U.S. representatives lied “on analogy” with Soviet Representative in Italy, being the liaison of the Allied Control Commission on Romania (hereinafter ACC) and their respective Governments, having access to all required information³. The Foreign Office considered unworthy to oppose Molotov’s views but inquired again if their Representative, acting under the supervision of British Military Representative, had the right to contact the Romanian Government; if not, they were ready to send a Political Representative, as the Soviets had already accepted this position in April, the same year⁴. We noticed the British willingness for the bilateral relations to be resumed. The same answer had been received from Molotov by Averell Harriman, the United States Ambassador in Moscow⁵.

After King Michael’s Coup of 23 August 1944 and Red Army occupation, British subjects in Bucharest sent via Swiss Legation their wish for a Mission in order to protect British interests against Soviet interferences⁶.

On 3 September, Captain Ivor Porter, former prisoner released after the coup, was not allowed to use the British flag, on his car, in Bucharest by the Soviets, although he was a British official in Romania, and he solicited written excuses. The next day, an official of the Soviet High Command expressed apologies for the incident but Foreign Office did not consider necessary to be delivered written apologies and thought even to withdraw Porter, although they sympathized with him⁷.

(available at <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=header&id=FRUS.FRUS1944v04>, accessed on 28.06.2015).

³ Clark Kerr’s telegram no. 85 Citizen of 11.09.1944 to Foreign Office (hereinafter FO) (R. 14322 in FO). microfiche 15, The Microfiches of Great Britain, Public Record Office, Foreign Office (hereinafter PRO FO), 371/44008.

⁴ FO’s telegram no. 237 Citizen of 12.09.1944 to Clark Kerr (R. 14322 in FO), mf. 17, Ibid.

⁵ Dennis Deletant, British Policy towards Romania: 23 August 1944 – 6 March 1945, ” in Dennis Deletant, Maurice Pearton, *Romania Observed. Studies in Contemporary Romanian History* (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1998), 131.

⁶ Horton’s telegram no. 4310 of 9.09.1944 from Berne to FO (R. 14254 in FO), mf. 10, PRO FO 371/44033.

⁷ Reed and Howard’s Report “Situation in Roumania” of 14.09.1944 and Talbot Rice’s dispatch no. EGB/RO/2044/3 of 8.09.1944 to Howard (R. 14537 in FO), mf. 85–87, PRO FO 371/44008; Ivor Porter, *Operațiunea „Autonomus”*: În

Obviously, the need to look after the United Kingdom interests developed rapidly.

British personnel began to gather in Bari (Italy) on 13 September and they expected to leave for Bucharest three days later⁸. Still, on 17 September they hadn’t left as John Le Rougetel, proposed Political Representative, hadn’t got any of the cyphers or other diplomatic papers⁹.

When Romanian Envoys returned from Moscow to Bucharest, they complained about British and United States lack of support and Maniu even declared to an American source: “How can you explain why the British have let us down in such a manner? We expected more consideration and more generous terms”¹⁰. Subsequently, Romanians suspected the British and the United States Missions of having a limited activity.

Molotov refused to agree with any Romanian proposal, made by the Romanian Legation in Angora, according to which Romania should be granted belligerency and the right to establish diplomatic relations with the Allied countries; Soviet reason was based on Romania regulation by the Allied Control Commission (ACC)¹¹.

On 18 September 1944, Foreign Office and War Office made recommendations for the prospective British Mission in Romania; they supported the lack of “desire to see Roumania fall under permanent Soviet control and any attempt by the Soviet authorities to encroach unnecessarily on Roumanian sovereignty or independence should be resisted”, the “ultimate policy is to ensure an independent and friendly Roumania but it must be always remembered that Roumania is a conquered country which will have to work for her passage home”, “provided King Michael proves his worth, is sufficiently co-operative, and wanted by the majority of Roumanians, we should support him”, “you should not allow any members of your Mission to indulge in actions such as secret contact with members of other Roumanian parties” and

România pe vreme de război, traducere de George G. Potra și Delia Răzdolescu (București: Editura Humanitas, 1991), 289.

⁸ Macmillan’s telegram no. 297 of 13.09.1944 to Foreign Office (R. 14545 in FO; Harold Macmillan was the British Resident Minister Central Mediterranean, with headquarters at Caserta–Italy, and by November 1944 he would become the Acting President of ACC Italy), mf. 78, PRO FO 371/44008.

⁹ Macmillan’s telegram no. 339 of 17.09.1944 to FO (R. 14753 in FO), mf. 138, Ibid.

¹⁰ Broad’s telegram no. 226 of 17.09.1944 from Bari (Italy) to Caserta and repeated to FO as no. 656 (R. 14803 in FO), mf. 152, Ibid.

¹¹ Clark Kerr’s telegram no. 2451 of 16.09.1944 to FO (R. 14757 in FO), mf. 145, Ibid.

"H.M.G. will wish to recover their political position and influence in Roumania which they possessed before the war. Although during the armistice period Soviet influence will be predominant, there can be no question of our abdicating of our claims to have an equal share in the post-war period of all political question affecting Roumania"¹².

British Mission had independent supply, maintenance, communications, and security mission, as the Soviet Mission in Italy, the latter ranging to sixty-twenty persons and twelve aircraft¹³.

On 21 September, Clark Kerr reported the Soviets refused to give in writing their agreement for bringing civilians in the British Mission¹⁴. No matter the Soviets' attitude, Foreign Office decide the preparations should be carried on¹⁵. Soviets proposed that the Americans and the British should have only five members in the Allied Control Commission and they could communicate with Romanian authorities only through the Allied Control Commission¹⁶. The British were also disturbed by the five member limit, arguing they didn't impose any number to the Soviets in Italy and again by the fact they weren't allowed to have a political (diplomatic) representative as diplomat Le Rougetel did not hold any military rank¹⁷. Sir Orme Sargent, a high-ranking official in the Foreign Office with a long career in the field, proposed that Le Rougetel should leave to Romania with British Military Mission and after their arrival, the British should try to persuade the Soviets of their right to have a civilian as a political representative in Bucharest.¹⁸ Eden decided to remind the Soviets they demanded their Mission should have the right to establish direct contact

with the Italian Government and because the British military component was forbidden to establish contact with the Romanian Government, the Foreign Office proposed a fully independent diplomatic British Mission in Romania; in London, nerves fell down as British didn't forget in April the Soviets had already accepted the United Kingdom's right to have a political representative in Romania and consequently, the British decided also to propose a political representative in Finland and a prospective fully tripartite ACC in Bulgaria, although the Chairman should belong only to the Soviets in the latter case¹⁹. On 21 September a part of British Mission, including Le Rougetel, left for Bari, preparing for the trip²⁰. On 24 September, they arrived in Romania²¹. Stevenson and Le Rougetel were accompanied by a consular adviser (second secretary), a commercial adviser, a Russian interpreter, a Romanian interpreter, a personal assistant (a signaller), and a doctor; the men, who included twenty-three non-officers (three clerks, three trunk operators, one electrician, six police, eight mess staff and batman, and two cipher secretaries) and the equipment, which included a Jeep and a wireless transmitter, were carried by five Dakotas (the name used by Royal Air Force for Douglas C-47, a military transport aircraft); they planned another three trips with six Dakotas each; Special Operations Executive (hereinafter SOE) members, who had "best contacts to obtain information" in Romania, waited until and if the Soviets accepted their presence²². A secret note of the Directorate of Civil Affairs admitted the British Mission "very small", representing "observers only", as Romania "surrendered" to the Soviets, although they publicly stated the existence of diplomatic sections.²³ Shortly after arrival, Lieutenant-General Vinogradov, Deputy Chairman of ACC and always in fact Chairman, received Stevenson, who stressed the necessity of increasing the number of five members as imposed by administration needs²⁴. Finally due to Soviet omnipotence, SOE presence entered in liquidation

¹² [the document] "Political Directive for the British Element of the Allied Mission of Control (18 September 1944)," in *Românii în istoria universală*, ed. I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu și V. Cristian, vol. III, *Izvoare străine pentru studiul istoriei românilor*, vol. ed. Ștefan S. Gorovei (Iași, 1988), 375; see also Romanian translation: "Directive Politice pentru Reprezentantii Britanici din Misiunea Aliată de Control din România," in V. Fl. Dobrinescu, L. Nicolescu și Gh. Nicolescu, *Relații militare româno-engleze (1918–1947)* (Pitești: Editura Cultura, 1998), Addendum, XXXIX, 202–203.

¹³ Macmillan's telegrams no. 13–14 of 19.09.1944 to FO (R. 14908 in FO), mf. 160, 162, PRO FO 371/44008.

¹⁴ Clark Kerr's telegram no. 145 Citizen of 21.09.1945 to FO (R. 14981 in FO), mf. 166, Ibid.

¹⁵ FO's telegram no. 108 Citizen of 22.09.1944 to Macmillan, mf. 168, Ibid.

¹⁶ Clark Kerr's telegram no. 140 Citizen of 21.09.1944 to FO (R. 14983 in FO), mf. 173, Ibid.

¹⁷ FO's telegram no. 284 Citizen of 22.09.1944 to Clark Kerr (R. 15049 in FO), mf. 12, Id. 371/44009.

¹⁸ Orme Sargent's Note of 22.09.1944 (R. 15049 in FO), mf. 5, Ibid.

¹⁹ FO's telegram no. 284 Citizen of 22.09.1944 to British Embassy in Moscow (R. 15049 in FO), mf. 12, Ibid.

²⁰ Macmillan's telegram no. 379 of 21.09.1944 to FO (R. 15051 in FO), mf. 20, Ibid.

²¹ Broad's telegram no. 255 of 24.09.1944 to FO (R. 15221 in FO), mf. 63, Ibid.

²² Extract from Brigadier Nicholson letter's to War Office of 27.09.1944 (R. 16290 in FO), mf. 72, Id. 371/44010; Le Rougetel's telegram no. 43 of 5.10.1944 to Foreign Office (R. 15936), mf. 55, Id. 371/44033.

²³ A.V. Anderson's Note C.A./B.M./103 of 26.09.1944 (R. 15390 in FO), mf. 88, Id. 371/44009.

²⁴ Le Rougetel's telegram no. 7 of 26.09.1944 to FO (R. 15452 in FO), mf. 90, Ibid.

and Porter was forbidden to keep any contact with the SOE establishment of Bari²⁵. Colonel Edward Greer, Head of Army Section, would have the task of Intelligence matters²⁶.

Air Vice Marshal Donald F. Stevenson was the Head of the British Section (British Mission) in ACC, from the autumn of 1944 until the autumn of 1947; the War Office and the Foreign Office also called him during the activity in Romania with the title “Commissioner”; his military rank was equivalent to a two star General. His character truly denoted the features of a gentleman and, because of that, he lacked the ability for compromises in politics²⁷. Due to his character, he remained the last one in the Mission to admit, at the end of November, the Soviet intention to communize Romania²⁸.

Once arrived in Bucharest, Le Rougetel started to make steps in involving in the process of accreditation of the Mission by the Romanian Government, with the latter's support, and by the non-implication in the matter of the Soviet High Command²⁹. Unexpectedly, the Foreign Office decided to stop this process as the persons who should become members of the diplomatic Mission were in the army, and they should have been withdrawn from the army; in the contrary, the latter should have been military in civilian posts and the Soviets had a predilection towards uniforms³⁰. On 3 October, Le Rougetel called on Grigore Niculescu-Buzești, Romanian Foreign Minister; after welcoming Le Rougetel as first diplomat of the United Nations in Romania, the extreme cordiality reached its climax when Romanian Minister expressed the hope for a Romanian Envoy in London (that would happen only after a year and a half)³¹. On 5 October, King Michael and Queen-Mother Helen, in the presence of Niculescu-Buzești, received in audience

Le Rougetel and James Marjoribanks, his deputy; while the Queen-Mother criticized the Soviet behaviour, Le Rougetel expressed worries about not removing all persons connected to Antonescu or Germans but the King told him the pro-German elements adhered to the Communist Party³². The British Political Representative continued to not possess diplomatic status, but he enjoyed all diplomatic privileges and immunities, what the Foreign Office really wanted in this matter, his official residence was extra-territorial³³.

Before 5 October, when other persons came, the Mission had already reached 26 officers and 57 other ranks³⁴. In order to better defend particular British interests, Stevenson proposed General Vasiliev, Chief of Staff of the Soviet High Command, to form a Soviet-British Commission and to begin civilian communication between Bucharest and London³⁵.

Making use of the right to approach Romanian Government, Le Rougetel met newly-appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Constantin Vișoianu, who complained of the war effort, the Soviet occupation and the Soviet use of rouble note which could have affected Romanian economy³⁶.

The presence of the Mission allowed the British to protest against Soviets in Galatz and Brăila who forbade the use of national flag for British ships and to obtain the possibility for the officers to travel inside Romania, after their itineraries were submitted to the Soviet High Command³⁷. Consequently, Kendall, Consular Adviser, visited Galatz and made a memorandum for the inhabitants' deplorable state of things³⁸.

Air Vice Marshal Donald F. Stevenson participated at the first plenary meeting of ACC (only Soviet and British representatives) on 16 October³⁹. Stevenson urged Andrey Yanuarevich Vyshinski, First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign

²⁵ Letter of 16.10.1944 to Orme Sargent (R. 16416 in FO), mf. 141 and Le Rougetel telegram no. 96 of 18.10.1944 to FO (R. 16810 in FO), mf. 172, Id. 371/44010.

²⁶ Stevenson's RAC no. 437/117 of 30.11.1944 to War Office (R.19683), mf. 283, Id. 371/44033.

²⁷ See details to Marian-Alin Dudoi, “The Activity of Air Vice Marshal Donald F. Stevenson, Head of the British Military Mission in Romania (1944–1945),” *AnB (SN)*, XX, 2012, 355–360.

²⁸ Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries 1944–1947*, Ed. Cornelia Bodea (Iași – Oxford – Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2000), 40.

²⁹ J. K. Arthur (C.A.6/44/220 in the War Office)'s dispatch of 3.10.1944 to FO (R. 15946 in FO), mf. 21, Id. 371/44010.

³⁰ Howard's dispatch of 12.10.1944 to J.K. Arthur (R. 15946 in FO), mf. 23, Ibid.

³¹ Le Rougetel's telegram no. 32 of 2.10.1944 to FO (R. 15777 in FO), mf. 163, Id. 371/44009.

³² Ivor Porter, *Mihai I al României. Regele și Țara*, [Ediția a II-a], traducere de Gabriel Tudor, revizuită de Christian Mititelu (București: Editura Allfa, 2008), 121–122.

³³ Parliamentary Question Mr. Malcolm Robertson – Mr. Law, 23.03.12945, mf. 5, PRO FO 371/48624.

³⁴ Stevenson's telegram no. 2 of 6.10.1944 to War Office (R. 16032 in FO), mf. 43, Id. 371/44010.

³⁵ Stevenson's RAC no. 61/117 of 15.10.1945 to War Office (R. 16445 in FO), mf. 166–167, Ibid.

³⁶ Le Rougetel's telegram no. 182 of 9.11.1944 to FO (R. 18268 in FO), mf. 150, Id. 371/44033.

³⁷ Stevenson's RAC no. 243/117 of 7.11.1944 about the Fourth Meeting with General Vasiliev (R. 18369), mf. 156, Ibid.

³⁸ Memorandum on visit to Galatz, mf. 192–195, Ibid.

³⁹ Stevenson's RAC no. 72 of 17.10.1944 to War Office (R. 16963 in FO), mf. 75, Id. 371/44011.

Affairs, to make steps in the formal recognition of ACC when the United States Mission finally arrived⁴⁰. The first combined meeting of ACC, including U.S. representatives, took place only on 20 December 1944⁴¹. For about a year, the British and the United States Missions remained delegations to ACC, and not a part of it in practice, as their presence at the meetings happened only after the invitations of the Soviet Chairmanship⁴².

Increasing activity of the Mission obliged to seek British Government approval for more personnel as from fifty-one clerks only eighteen could type and five could do shorthands; the Mission comprised of ten sections: Secretariate, Navy, Army, Air, Transportation, Oil, Trade, Food Industry and Agriculture, Finance and Consular⁴³.

British Mission provided the Foreign Office with relevant facts about Romanian developments. The Romanian administration in Moldavia functioned discontinuously because of the Red Army interferences, Soviet forbade Romanian administration in Northern Transylvania; the Communist Party refused to disarm its members, thus prolonging political crisis and NKVD supervised the removal of equipment and personnel from the oil fields, including three British ones⁴⁴. The promise, Lieutenant General Vinogradov had made several days before to Stevenson that the British representatives should be consulted before, had not been kept⁴⁵. To Stevenson and Le Rougetel's disappointment, the Foreign Office took into consideration "Prime-Minister [Winston Churchill] in two minutes has warned us to remember that the Soviet Government have the lead in Roumania in consideration to our position in Greece and the Secretary of State [Anthony Eden] has spoken in a similar sense to Sir Orme Sargent" and Sargent clearly admitted "I am afraid however that the percentage of 90–10 could not be construed to give us any right to be consulted"⁴⁶. The instructions sent from London recommended they continued to be prior consulted by ACC, not be present

to the meetings of ACC with the Romanian Government because Soviets took the lead in Romania in exchange of Greece but they must insist on Soviets that British oil concerns must be respected⁴⁷. The inquired Vyshinski replied the removal of oil equipment happened because it was German, brought to Romania in order to be ready to be sent to Baku if the city was captured, but the British found it untrue as it was bought from Germany, USA, Great Britain or elsewhere in the Interwar Period; the removal, especially from the British-Dutch giant Astra Română, reached 17500 tons and the British expected a rapidly diminishing production⁴⁸. Foreign Office rejected Stevenson's proposal for combined committees of ACC but instructed Clark Kerr to insist on stopping removing and even returning it⁴⁹. Molotov refused any reconsideration of Soviet point of view claiming as belonging to the Germans⁵⁰. On 18 November, when the seized quantity had exceeded 23000 tons, Stevenson approached Vyshinski unsuccessfully in Bucharest⁵¹.

The disloyal Soviets did not previously consulted the British when they took twenty-ships and submarines of the Romanian Royal Navy (four destroyers, three gunboats, three submarines, three torpedo boats, three submarine chasers, three landing crafts, one submarine depot and two minelayers), held in Constanza, on 12 October and transported them to Odessa and later refused British Mission Air Commodore Lee's permission to visit the Romanian operational airfields⁵².

Both the United Kingdom and the United States representatives had no means to limit Soviet interferences in Romanian political affairs; backed by the Red Army and Soviet High Command of ACC, Romanian Communists started to achieve political victories as chapters in one of Marx or Lenin's books.

His Majesty's Government did not succeed to achieve its task to protect (mainly economic) British interests in Romania as the Soviets

⁴⁰ Stevenson's RAC no. 326/165 of 18.11.1944 to War Office (R. 18868 in FO), mf. 148, Id. 371/44012.

⁴¹ Notes taken at the first combined meeting of ACC Romania on 20.12.1944, mf. 111, Id. 44014.

⁴² Deletant. In Deletant and Pearton (1998), 135.

⁴³ Stevenson's RAC no. 270/1409 of 10.11.1944 to War Office (R. 18738 in FO), mf. 158, Id. 371/44033.

⁴⁴ Le Rougetel telegram's no. 154 and 155 of 3.11.1944 to Foreign Office (R. 17779 and R. 17782 in FO), mf. 3–4, Id. 371/44012.

⁴⁵ Stevenson's RAC no. 192/112 of 2.11.1944 to War Office (R. 17818 in FO), mf. 11, Ibid.

⁴⁶ Report "Soviet Activities in Roumania" of 6.11.1944 (R. 17819 in FO), mf. 12, Ibid.

⁴⁷ FO's no. 171 of 8.11.1944 to Le Rougetel (R. 17819 in FO), mf. 26–27, Ibid.

⁴⁸ Stevenson's RAC no. 246/923 of 8.11.1944 to War Office (R. 18136 in FO), mf. 63, Ibid.

⁴⁹ FO's telegram no. 4227 of 10.11.1944 to Clark Kerr (R. 18136 in FO), mf. 71, Ibid.

⁵⁰ Clark Kerr no. 3394 of 14.11.1944 to War Office (R. 18379 in FO), mf. 96, Ibid.

⁵¹ Stevenson's RAC no. 326/165 of 18.11.1944 to War Office (R. 18868 in FO), mf. 144, Ibid; Stevenson's RAC no. 58/801 of 18.10.1944 to War Office (16717 in FO), mf. 147–148, Id. 371/44010.

⁵² Stevenson RAC no. 271/109 of 11.11.1944 to War Office (R. 18601 in FO), mf. 130, Id. 371/44012.

behaved in Romanian economy as in a conquered country and did not take into consideration any argument. The Soviet Government considered they were the only ones to define and apply the United Nations policy and believed the two powers' representatives as spectators providing the same role as for Soviet representatives in Italy; the United States and the United Kingdom did not accept the view as Soviet representatives had no economic interest in Italy. The intense activity of the British Mission and of the Office of the Political Representative in order to get all sort of information proved unnecessary in general, due to the outcome of the World War Two, specifically the Cold War, but useful for historians.

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