Note from the Head of the II European Department of the People's Commissariat on Foreign Affairs of the USSR, K.V. Novikov, to the Deputy USSR People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, A.J. Vyshinsky, 11 January 1943

SECRET

To comrade A. Ya. VYSHINSKY[[1]](#footnote-1)

On consultations between the British and the Soviet governments

1. There are no direct agreements between Britain and the USSR which would impose on both governments the obligation to advise each other on certain issues, except for the issues concerning war which are specified in the article 2 of the British-Soviet Treaty of 26 May 1942[[2]](#footnote-2).

2. The article 3 of the British-Soviet Treaty of 26 May 1942 postulates the willingness of both parties to “unite with other like-minded states in adopting common actions in the postwar period with the aim of securing peace and resisting the aggressor”, which, in the broadest sense, requires consultations between the British and the Soviet governments on issues permeating to securing peace and resisting the aggressor. However, neither at the time of signing the Treaty, nor anytime since was the nature of such issues determined[[3]](#footnote-3).

3. In addition to the agreement, the British have made the following statements on this issue:

a) In conversation with V. M. Molotov[[4]](#footnote-4) on 21 March 1942, Kerr[[5]](#footnote-5) stated that Churchill and Eden[[6]](#footnote-6) are interested in solving the issues of the post-war order on a tripartite basis[[7]](#footnote-7). The British government is ready at any time to examine and, as much as possible, fulfill all the Soviet provisions on this issue;

b) V. M. Molotov informed Comrade Maisky[[8]](#footnote-8) that in conversation with Eden (the conversation was about our negotiations with the Yugoslavs on the conclusion of the treaty that would reflect the post-war borders of Yugoslavia[[9]](#footnote-9)) the latter proposed that the USSR and Britain would not conclude agreements of that kind with small countries without prior bilateral consultation and coordination. V. M. Molotov suggested that Comrade Maisky should tell Eden that we agree with his proposal in principle and that we would like to have specific suggestions from the British on this issue[[10]](#footnote-10).

Although no such suggestions came from the British, we may still consider that, in principle there exists an agreement with the British to consult each other on post-war issues. However, in this case as well, the nature of issues subject to consultation was not determined.

4. Based on the above-mentioned considerations the British may be considered to have committed the following violations regarding mutual consultation:

a) In the first half of 1942 the Norwegian and the Dutch governments[[11]](#footnote-11), being in London, were having detailed discussions regarding the conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty. The British Foreign Ministry was aware of these negotiations, but Eden did not consider it necessary to consult or to inform the Soviet government about it.

b) On 27 July 1942, Eden reported that:

1. At the meeting of allied Finance ministers held on 24 July and headed by the British, a decision was made to establish a Sub-committee that would devise measures for transitioning to a new monetary system after the war[[12]](#footnote-12).

2. At the same meeting, the allied Finance Ministers decided not to recognize possible deals on property transfers on the territories occupied by the enemy.

c) On August, 8, 1942 Comrade Maisky received Eden's letter in which the latter outlined the history of negotiations between the British government and the governments of other allied countries (except the USSR) concerning the punishment of war criminals[[13]](#footnote-13).

d) Comrade Maisky asked Eden about the rumours that the British are involved in trying to restore the Spanish monarchy and that they consider Don Juan[[14]](#footnote-14), a British Navy officer and the son of Alfonso XIII[[15]](#footnote-15) to be the candidate for the throne. Eden confirmed that negotiations were taking place and stated that the British government would not object to the restoration of the monarchy, but that they made it clear to Don Juan that he would not be accepted by the English if he became King with the help of the Germans.

e) On 28 September, Maisky received a letter from Leith-Ross[[16]](#footnote-16) stating that the Inter-allied Сcommittee on post-war aid would be convened that same week, when the creation of technical sub-committees on road transport, nutrition and healthcare would be discussed. The letter indicated that the USSR would be invited to chair the Sub-committee on healthcare.

f) On 6 October 1942, Comrade Maisky received a letter dated October, 3 from the Foreign Ministry, stating that the British government decided to announce the declaration on the punishment for war criminals in the House of Lords[[17]](#footnote-17).

g) On 11 November 1942, Eden informed that on 20 November the British Trade Ministry would convey a meeting of representatives of the allied governments to discuss post-war economic and trade issues[[18]](#footnote-18).

h) On 9 December, Comrade Maisky received a letter from Eden in which the latter informed the Soviet government about the British government’s decision to announce on 19 December, in the Parliament the British recognition of Albanian independence[[19]](#footnote-19).

All these matters, undoubtedly, required prior consultations of the British with the Soviet government. In practice, the Soviet government was either informed about certain events as ‘fait accompli’ (e.g. “a”, “b”, “c” and “d”), or simply received information of British decisions that had already been made (“e”, “f”, “g”, “h”).

5. This note has not covered the many violations of the British-Soviet-Iranian Treaty[[20]](#footnote-20) committed by the British.

6. This note also does not cover the violations committed by the British in relation to Comrade Bogomolov’s Embassy[[21]](#footnote-21) (Breakfast meetings of Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of the small allied countries, issues regarding Mikhailovich[[22]](#footnote-22), British-Polish relations, etc.)

7. The reason why the British evade consultations with the Soviet government is the unwillingness of the British to be restricted in solving post-war issues. The British government would willingly make an oral promise, as it was done by Kerr in his conversation with Molotov on 21 March, which, by the way, was patronising. They would consult the Soviet government in cases when the issue can’t be resolved without the USSR participation. In all other instances they took decisions and will strive to take decisions without prior consultations with the Soviet government.

8. We should accept Eden’s proposal to determine the timetable for consultations on simple and complex issues, but one has to bear in mind that in this case as well, the British are avoiding to ascertain the range of issues that need to be consulted upon, since Eden, although he offered to fix the timetable for consultations, did not respond to Molotov’s proposal dated 4 July to make specific suggestions on this issue. Therefore, Eden’s proposal should be framed in the form of bilateral communiqués indicating the main issues that both governments have to consult each other on[[23]](#footnote-23).

(K. Novikov[[24]](#footnote-24))

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1. Vyshinsky, Andrei Yanuarevich (1883 - 1954) - Soviet statesman and diplomat, First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1940 - 1946), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1946 -. 1949), the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs (1949 -. 1953), the first Deputy Minister of foreign Affairs of the USSR and the Soviet Union's permanent representative to the United Nations (1953 - 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This refers to the Treaty of alliance between the USSR and the United Kingdom in the war against Nazi Germany and its accomplices in Europe and on cooperation and mutual assistance after the war, signed on 26 May 1942 in London. The parties undertook not to negotiate or conclude an armistice or a peace treaty with Germany and her satellites, to make it impossible for such aggression to be repeated, provide each other with economic assistance after the war, not to take part in any coalition directed against one another, to provide military assistance in case of involvement in war with Germany or any state. Published in: Soviet-British relations during the Second World War, 1941 - 1945 (hereinafter - SANO). T. 1. M., 1983, pp 237-240. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. During negotiations, the British side sought as much as possible to avoid mentioning specific political issues in the agreement or its Protocols, which could be interpreted as an attempt by the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union to decide on the issues before the end of the war (and cause, among other things, US backlash). In view of this, in a telegram to Stalin dated 24 May, Molotov and Maisky called the British project an "empty declaration, in which the USSR does not need to be part of". Stalin, however, found the British project an "important document", agreeing to take it as a basis for a future treaty, and took into account that the absence of references to specific issues left the USSR "hands-free". See more: Rzheshevskiy O.А. Stalin i Cherchill’. Vstrechi. Besedy. Diskussii. Dokumenty, kommentarii, 1941 – 1945. M., 2004. Ch. 2. (In English: Rzheshevsky O. A. War and Diplomacy: The Making of the Grand Alliance 2nd ed N.Y., 2013. Part 2). W.P. (42) 220, 25/06/42 // The National Archives of Great Britain (TNA), Cabinet Office (CAB) 66/24. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich (1890 - 1986) - Soviet statesman, Chairman (1930-1941), First Deputy Chairman of People's Commissars (1941-1957), The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs (1939-1949, 1953-1956, from 1946 - Minister). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Kerr, John Archibald Clark (1882 - 1951) - British diplomat, British Ambassador to the USSR (1942 – 1946). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Eden, Anthony, Robert (1897 - 1977) - British statesman, Minister of the Dominions (1939 -1940), Minister of War (1940), Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1940-1945, 1951-1955), Prime -Minister (1955-1957). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A telegram to Kerr (dated March 22) with a report on this meeting, see: British Documents on Foreign Affairs. Part III. Ser. A. Frederick, 1997. p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Maisky, Ivan Mikhailovich (1884 - 1975) - Soviet diplomat, Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain (1932-1943), Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1943-1946). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The discussion took place between Molotov and Eden during a meeting in London on 9 June 1942. See: Rzheshevskiy O.А., ‘Stalin and Churchill’. p. 316–317. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Molotov’s telegram with instructions for Maisky (dated 4 July 1942) published in the SANO. T. 1. p. 254. The discussion was later summed up in a Soviet Embassy memorandum to the UK Foreign Office on 30 August 1943. Published in Sovetskiy Soyuz na mezhdunarodnykh konferentsiyakh perioda Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny, 1941 – 1945. T. 1 (hereinafter - the Moscow Conference). M., 1984, pp 291-292. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Norwegian and Dutch governments were in exile in London after Germany’s occupation of Norway and the Netherlands in 1940. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Allied governments’ ministerial meeting was convened by the British Treasury on 24 July 1942, in order to co-ordinate the post-war projects on financial restructuring that were discussed in London in April 1942. Conversation recording is available in: TNA, Treasury 160/34329, see more info:. Crombois J. Camille Gutt and Postwar International Finance. London, 2011. p. 68-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In the beginning of August 1942, at a meeting with representatives of eight governments in exile, as well as with representatives of the French National Committee, Eden informed them of the British Cabinet’s decision to form a committee for dealing with war crimes (the Cabinet committee on the treatment of war criminals), and follow the principles stated by Churchill, 25 October 1941 (the prosecution of German war criminals being one of the main goals of the war). Eden sought to emphasize to his interlocutors that the meeting was informal and should not be in the public spotlight. See: A. Kochavi, Prelude to Nuremberg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment. Chapel Hill, 1998. p. 31-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Juan, Count of Barcelona (1913 - 1993) - of the Bourbon dynasty; son of Alfonso III and designated by him as heir to the throne; father of Juan Carlos I, King of Spain (1975-2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Alfonso XIII (1886 - 1941) - of the Bourbon dynasty; son of Alfonso XII, King of Spain from 1886 (in actuality since 1902) to 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Leith-Ross, Frederick William (1887 - 1968) - chief economic adviser to the British government (1932-1946), general director of the Ministry of Economic Warfare (1939-1942). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The statement was made by the Lord Chancellor George Simon, chairman of the committee of the British Cabinet on the treatment of war criminals on 7 October 1942, and was devoted to the procedure and mechanism of implementing decisions on the fate of the war criminals, the powers of the United Nations War Crimes Commission (see: Hansard Parliamentary Debates (House of Lords) Vol 124. Col. 577-588). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This was about the British continuing discussions on post-war financial and trade issues with the representatives of Allied governments in exile and the French National Committee, which was held in the spring - summer of 1942. In November 1942, the discussion unfolded in discord (primarily from French representatives) due to the Anglo-American decision on the unilateral establishment of exchange rates in North African territories that were to be liberated as a result of operation "Torch". Allied governments in exile sought to prevent the recurrence of a similar situation in the territories of liberated European countries. See: Crombois J. Op. cit. pp. 69, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The British government’s actions on the Albanian issue caused serious dissatisfaction of the People's Commissariat. On 16 December, Molotov instructed Maisky to "indicate to Eden the need for the British government to abandon the practice, in which it presents us with the fact of its decision on a particular issue within the next few days, invites us to join in, but leaves no time for active bilateral consultations between the two Governments. One can hardly recognize this procedure as acceptable. In particular, the planned speech about Albania closely touches on post-war issues, on which Eden suggested a preliminary consultation between our governments" ( AVP RF.. F. 07. Op. 4. P. 26. D. 13. L. 69). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Treaty of alliance between the USSR, Great Britain and Iran was signed in Tehran on 29 January 1942. According to the agreement, the Soviet Union and Britain pledged to respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Iran, to protect it from German or any other power aggression, as well as provide it with possible economic assistance. Iran made a commitment to cooperate with the Allied countries with all available means, although the help of the Iranian armed forces was limited to maintaining the internal order in Iran. The parties have undertaken not to enter into agreements that are incompatible with the provisions of this agreement. The agreement provided Iran's cooperation with the states of the anti-Hitler coalition. Dokumenty vneshney politiki SSSR (hereinafter– DVP). 1942. T. XXIV. Kn. 1. Tula, 2010. p. 122–127. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bogomolov, Alexander Efremovich (1900 - 1969) - Soviet diplomat, Soviet Ambassador to the Allied governments in London (1941-1943). He was originally accredited to the governments in exile of Norway, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia. In 1943-1944 he was named authorized representative of the USSR with the French Committee of National Liberation. He was the Soviet Ambassador in France (1944-1950). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Mihailovich, Dragoljub ("Drazha") (1893 - 1946) - Yugoslav military and political leader (1942-1945). He was the War Minister of the Yugoslav government in exile in London. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The position of the People's Commissariat, as outlined by Novikov in the autumn of 1943 remained unchanged and was reflected in the 'Report on the consultations between the Soviet and British governments on the post-war issues’ of 11 October 1943. It was prepared on the eve of the convening of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers. See: AVP PF. F. 07. Op. 4. P. 26. D. 13. L. 67-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Novikov Kirill V. (1905 - 1983) - Soviet diplomat, counsellor of the Embassy (until 1941, plenipotentiary representative) of the USSR in the UK (1940 – 1942), Head of the II European Department of the People's Commissariat of the USSR (1942 – 1947, from 1946 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR), Soviet Ambassador to India (1947 – 1953). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)