The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, A. Eden, to Prime Minster, W. Churchill, 25 January 1944.

Your minute No. M(S) 31/4 [[1]](#footnote-1)

[…]This minute gives the position as regards the whole of the Soviet Union’s western frontier, with the exception of Poland.

RUSSO-FINNISH FRONTIER

The frontier established in 1920[[2]](#footnote-2) was identical with that which had existed throughout the XIXth century between Russia and the old Grand Duchy of Finland, except that Petsamo and the Western half of the Rybachi Peninsula were ceded to Finland. This 1920 frontier was modified to the Soviet Union’s advantage as a result of the Russo-Finnish Peace Treaty of the 12th March, 1940[[3]](#footnote-3). The Russians have always maintained since that time that all they want is the restoration of the position under that Treaty though at Tehran Stalin said that they might wish to have Petsamo in place of their thirty years lease of Hangö[[4]](#footnote-4). […]

7. … all the areas in question were part of the former Tsarist Empire with the exception of Northern Bukovina which, up to 1940, had never been part of Russia. The boundaries now asked for by the Russians fall short of the boundaries of Tsarist Russia in that the whole of Finland and most of Poland formed, of course, part of Imperial Russia.

8. I am convinced, as I was when I wrote W.P. (43) 438, that we should agree to all these claims. But in the case of the Baltic States, we should maintain our decision not formally and publicly to recognise them before the peace settlement, as otherwise we should certainly have a clamour here and abroad about violating the Atlantic Charter and have difficulties with the Americans. I do not think anybody will mind about Romania, especially as Bessarabia had been Russian before 1918, and it would be a complete answer in the case of Finland that the Soviet Union was merely recovering territory ceded to her by the Finnish Government in 1940.

9. I am inclined to think that we should prepare the Russians as to the line we are going to take publicly before their nearer approach to the territories which they claim provokes public discussion. Otherwise we might have an explosion from Moscow or at least in the Soviet press. We could assure Stalin that we had no intention of disputing the Soviet claims, explain our difficulties and warn him in advance of our intention to go on saying that these territorial matters were all for final settlement at the Peace Conference.

A[nthony] E[den]

25th January, 1944

[TNA, PREM 3/399/6]

Keywords: Finland, Romania

1. See previous document, Churchill's note of 16 January. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In accordance with the peace treaty between the RSFSR and Finland of 14 October 1920, signed in the city of Yuryev (Tartu). It ended the Soviet-Finnish war of 1918 - 1920 and established the border between the RSFSR and Finland. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Signed in Moscow. It ended the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939 - 1940. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Stalin’s announcement in Tehran was quite a surprise to Eden. Earlier, in the program memorandum "Western borders of the USSR" (5 October 1943), the British minister assumed that "the island of Hangö ... about which the Finns are very sensitive, would certainly be one of the places where the Russians would want a base] (WP (43) 438, Memo by Eden, 05/10/1943 // TNA, CAB 66/41). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)