Note from the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, I.M. Maisky, to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, V.M. Molotov, 10 December 1945

FOR THE ADDRESSEE ONLY.

Dear Vyacheslav Mihailovich,

In connection with the forthcoming conference of three Ministers for Foreign Affairs […] I consider it necessary to express my thoughts in hope that they may be useful for you in preparing for and carrying out this important meeting.

In Yalta and especially in Berlin it was evident to me that the contacts between our delegation, on the one hand, and the delegations of our partners, on the other, were not quite sufficient. […]

There were formal exchanges - at conference sessions where official proposals and official decisions were made.

There were informal exchanges - at mutual visits, breakfasts, dinners and so forth - between Truman, Churchill and Comrade Stalin, between Byrnes, Eden and you. The latter contacts were very important and useful. However, they had a drawback: due to the extremely high rank of the said persons, even their informal exchanges were too reserved and the opinions expressed during these contacts were too obliging. This constrained the freedom of further maneuvering to a certain extent.

As for the less reserved and obliging informal contacts at lower levels (deputies of people’s commissars, heads of departments, advisers, etc.), they were almost non-existent. The staff who were categorised as such, as a rule, did not even visit the buffet where the British and the Americans were constantly socialising and exchanging opinions. Thereby, we made it easier for our partners to plot against us, since they did not face the counteracting influence of the Soviet side at the buffet […]

As a result, in Berlin there was a situation which may be better illustrated by the following comparison. When the battleship is at sea, ahead of it and on each side there is always its escort, i.e. smaller vessels - destroyers, cruisers, etc. This escort protects the battleship, conducts preliminary investigation, observes the horizon and signals the battleship on their findings. Sometimes the escort fights submarines, destroyers and other smaller vessels of the enemy right on the spot, clearing the way for the battleship. The data received by the battleship from the escort facilitates in its decision-making: whether to be in the battle? Or, on the contrary, to bow out of a battle? To head for the north or for the west? Meanwhile in Berlin our diplomatic battleships acted almost without any escort of smaller vessels, which, of course, made their working conditions more difficult.

But the Berlin Conference still took place during the war when the desire to gain victory made our partners behave more modestly and more decently concerning the USSR. Now the war is finished. The mood of our partners has changed. They became much more self-confident and impudent. Moreover, the nuclear bomb really went to their heads[[1]](#footnote-1). Any negotiations and conferences with them are now more difficult. I believe that in such conditions the escort cover of smaller vessels would be more useful and necessary for our diplomatic battleships than it was several months ago.

The practical conclusion from the aforementioned is as follows. It seems to me that at the forthcoming conference you should charge your assisting employees to support close informal contact with the respective parts of British and American delegations, i.e. to meet them not only at official sessions or formal receptions and banquets, but also apart from this, to sometimes have a private breakfast with them, to have a cup of tea, visit a theatre, etc. Tactfully using all such meetings, they should, on the one hand, study our partners and, on the other, in conversations with them argue our position on certain issues. For greater efficiency we should probably allocate between your assistants the "handling" of separate British people or Americans or separate groups of British people and Americans. Every day you could give these people certain commissions and then get reports and information from them. It would facilitate your understanding of our partners’ moods and deciding on the best policy in existing circumstances.

[signature] I. Maisky

Moscow

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[FPARF, f. 0430, inv. 2, fold. 4, file 1, pp.19-21]

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1. A broadly comparable mood found reflection in the final account of the British military mission to the USSR. The Chief of Mission, Lieutenant-General J. Gammell, noted that ‘the Russians were somewhat disconcerted to find their position suddenly weakened by the appearance of this new weapon’. At the same time he did not share the apparent illusion of the continuation of the British and American atomic monopoly; in the USSR ‘there is considerable activity in the scientific and industrial circles regarding the development of atomic energy … [the Russians] will press forward research and development with the greatest energy’ (C.O.S. (45) 597 (O), Final Report on No. 30 Military Mission, 03/10/1945 // TNA, CAB 80/97). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)