Telegram of the USSR ambassador to Britain I.M. Maisky to the People's Commissariat on Foreign Affairs of the USSR, 9 February 1943.

CIPHER TELEGRAM

MOST SECRET

High priority.

Especially important.

On Monday, 8 February, at 10.30 p.m., Churchill received me and I gave him the message from Comrade Stalin dated 6 February. Eden was present. Both of them were pleased with the message[[1]](#footnote-1). We had a long conversation which lasted for almost 3 hours. I will report about it in more detail later. For now, let me inform you about the most important thing – the British and American military plans in 1943. Churchill read to me his telegram to Roosevelt in which he formulated his suggestions and Roosevelt's reply in which the President made some minor amendments to Churchill's suggestions[[2]](#footnote-2). Tomorrow the General Staff should give its comments – Churchill, however, does not expect any serious objections from it. After that Churchill will send the message to Comrade Stalin. Thus, last night the military plans of the western operations have not been definitively formulated yet. However, the main objectives were already determined. They are as follows:

1) To finish operations in Tunisia, which, as Churchill has already informed Comrade Stalin earlier[[3]](#footnote-3), should happen no later than in April according to British and American plans.

2) After that, the operation against Sicily (nicknamed “husky” [sic]) with its continuation on the southern extremity of Italy (“boot”) is to start in June-July. If resistance in Italy is weak or if it would be possible to organize an internal revolution in the country to form a new government and to withdraw Italy from the war, operations may be continued along the Apennine peninsula to the north with their further penetration into southern France and to the Balkans.

3) If resistance in Italy (due to Germans) will be serious and if it won’t be possible to withdraw Italy from war then, having consolidated their positions in Puglia and Calabria, the British and Americans will head to Yugoslavia and the western part of the Balkans, in general.

4) Operation against the Dodecanese Islands[[4]](#footnote-4) is also possible, but is of secondary importance.

5) It is suggested that approximately in August the task force of 17-20 divisions would be sent from Britain to France, 14-15 of which will be British divisions and the rest will be American. In this regard, Churchill says that, while he was in Moscow he mentioned to Comrade Stalin 27 American divisions which Washington promised to send to Britain by April, 1943[[5]](#footnote-5). Instead, Americans are now firmly promising only 4 divisions, and only in the month of August (right now there is only one American division in Europe, - the very same one Churchill spoke of as far back as November[[6]](#footnote-6)). Churchill believes it might be possible to nudge the Americans towards shortening the delay and increasing the size of the armies, however, to be on the safe side they do not count on more than 4 American divisions for the landing in France (Churchill, by the way, said that in the American division, with its entire rearguard totaling up to 50 thousand men, only 15-17 thousand are fighters).

6) Throughout 1943, air operations against Germany (including Berlin) and against Italy will be regularly increased.

7) Great attention will be given to fighting submarines, including intensified bombardment of such submarine bases on the Atlantic coast of France as Lorient, Saint-Nazaire and others.

8) Such are the major military plans the British and Americans made in Casablanca[[7]](#footnote-7).

09.02.1943

MAISKY

[FPARF, f. 059а, inv. 7, fold. 13, file 6, pp. 218-220].

Keywords: Italy

1. In the message, Stalin expressed Soviet Union’s readiness to improve relations with Turkey, wished success to the Anglo-American armies in North Africa and thanked Churchill for his congratulations on the Red Army’s victory in Stalingrad (published in Pechatnov VO, Magadeev IE, Stalin Correspondence with Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill during World War II. M., 2015. T. 1. p. 361). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The exchange messages between Churchill and Roosevelt took place on 3-5 February. See: Churchill & Roosevelt. The Complete Correspondence / Ed. by W. Kimball. Vol. 2. Princeton, 1984. p. 133-134. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In a letter dated 1 February 1943 (received in Moscow the next day), Churchill informed Stalin of his hope that "the enemy will be completely destroyed or expelled from the African coast towards the end of April" Pechatnov VO, Magadeyev I.E. Perepiska. T. 1. p. 356). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Dodecanese Islands (Southern Sporades) in the Aegean Sea were occupied by Italy after the Italo-Turkish War of 1912. After the capitulation of Italy in World War II (September 1943), the island became a battleground between German and Allied forces and occupied by the German occupied until the end of the war. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Information points to the fact that the Anglo-American military command had planned to raise the number of US troops in the British Isles to 1,043,400 by 9 April 1943. Churchill announced this to Stalin in a meeting on 15 August 1942 ,during a visit to Moscow (Rzheshevskiy O.А. Stalin i Cherchill’. p. 360). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Possibly, Maisky was not quite accurate. During his conversation with Churchill that took place on 7 December 1942, the latter stated that there was only one American division in the UK and that "the others had gone to Africa". The ambassador reported the conversation to Moscow on the same day. Published in: Put’ k Velikoy Pobede: SSSR v voyne glazami zapadnykh sovremennikov. Dokumenty i materialy / Pod red. А.V. Torkunova; authors: V.O. Pechatnov, M.M. Narinskiy, I.E. Magadeyev. M., 2015. p. 345. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill in Casablanca took place on 14-23 January 1943. During the meeting the Mediterranean strategic line was approved, which consisted of an Allied landing in Sicily (Operation "Husky", July 1943) after the end of fighting in Tunisia. This decision inevitably delayed the opening of a second front in 1944. Passing along Churchill’s text message to Stalin on 9 February, along with the Prime Minister’s information about the decisions made at the Casablanca conference, Maisky said: "The message, as we can see, quite closely coincides with what I have heard from Churchill in the evening of 8 February "(Maisky -. People's Commissariat, February 11, 1943 // AVP PF. F. Op. 059. 10. P. 8. D. 64. L. 31.). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)