From a telegram of the USSR ambassador to Britain, I.M. Maisky, dated 9 February 1943

I will mention the following points from a conversation [I had] with Churchill on the evening of 8 February:

1. Churchill referred to comrade Stalin’s message to Roosevelt in response to the President's project to send to our [corner of the] Far East 100 bombers and to have an inspection of our bases by US generals.[[1]](#footnote-1) "Roosevelt was terribly furious - Churchill said - and wanted to respond very harshly. But I dissuaded him. I told the President: Who is really fighting? Only Stalin is fighting, and how he fights... [Hereinafter: an omission in the original] We cannot in such a case hold everything against him. Roosevelt agreed with me and decided not to quarrel with Stalin." Continuing, Churchill said: "The president asked me about the reason for Stalin's failure to come. I told the President: Stalin is a realist. He is not affected by words. Had he come, then he would firstly ask us both the following question: "Well, how many Germans did you kill in 1942? And how many do you intend to kill in 1943?" And how would we have responded to this? We ourselves don’t know. This was clear to Stalin from the beginning – what would have been the point for him to show up? Especially when back home they were truly achieving massive tasks."[[2]](#footnote-2)

Churchill is very concerned about the spat between comrade Stalin and Roosevelt. "This is not good - said Churchill - not so much for the duration of the war, but for the post-war period. When peace comes, the situation will be extremely difficult. This, of course, personally concerns me very little. I'm an old man, nearly 70 years old, and don’t have much time left on this Earth (there and then, Churchill became somewhat mist-eyed), but the country is not going to die, the nation will remain. They will have to keep going somehow.

I do not see any other way for mankind’s salvation than the close cooperation between the USSR, the USA and England. It will most likely not be easy: America is conservative and is more and more moving to the right, while the Soviet Union is socialist. How will relations between them develop after the war? I do not know. Britain should become a bridge between them ... Russia and Britain are inextricably linked in Europe and Asia. We need each other. We cannot do without each other. Therefore, in the end will always be able to come to an agreement. America? ... It is separated from you and me by oceans. It thinks that it needs neither you nor me... a big mistake. Yet in many respects, Americans are so inexperienced and naive ... Whatever it was, I was very upset by the misunderstanding between Stalin and the President. We must have none of it. I keep thinking, ‘how could I arrange a meeting between them?’" And then, with a sly expression on his face, Churchill almost boyishly added: "Do you know why on my way back from Turkey I flew in to Cyprus?"

I shrugged. In an even slyer manner, Churchill continued: "Of course, my old regiment is there, etc. But this is nonsense. I flew in to Cyprus to see whether it is possible to make it a place of future visits between the three of us - Stalin, Roosevelt and me. He came to the conclusion that it is possible. And is even very good.[[3]](#footnote-3) A wonderful island. It can be completely isolated. No one else will know. From Tbilisi to Cyprus by plane it is no more than 5 hours. The President will come, as he is now very fond of flying. In short, you can’t imagine a better place. Not like Iceland, which we had discussed...[[4]](#footnote-4)

I even gave the order: begin to build in Cyprus a few simple but comfortable buildings should there be a congregation of three delegations." In view of this, it can be seen that Churchill is very much fond of all this secrecy, all this romanticism. "But, please, not a word to anyone" - he said, putting his hands to his lips. I swore that I would be silent as a grave.

[...]

Churchill was lost in admiration and even affection for the Red Army. When he speaks about it, he wells up with tears. Comparing Russia of the last war with the Russia (i.e. Soviet) of the present war, Churchill said: "Taking into account all the factors, I believe that the new Russia is five times stronger than the old." Slightly teasing Churchill, I half-laughingly asked: "And how do you explain this phenomenon?" Churchill in the same tone replied: "If your system makes your people happy, I am for your system. However, I have little interest in what will happen after the war ... Socialism, Communism, cataclysm ... as long as the Huns are defeated."

9/II-1943 г. МАЙСКИЙ

[FPARF, f. 059a, inv. 7, fold. 13, file 6, pp. 221–224]

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1. This was in reference to Stalin's letters to Roosevelt on 5 and 13 January, in which, in a harsh manner, he rejected President’s repeated appeals to direct 100 bombers to the Far East and for General O. Bradley to inspect Soviet military installations with a view of future deployment of US Air Force for raids on Japan (see: Pechatnov VO, Magadeev IE, Correspondence. T. 1. pp. 321-327). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Churchill really did write Roosevelt something like this as back as late November 1942: "I can say in advance what will be the Russians’ position. They will ask you and me: ‘How many German divisions will you be able to contain in the summer of 1943? How many did you contain in in 1942?’ They will certainly demand a strong second front in 1943 in the form of a massive invasion of the continent from the west, south or from both directions» (Churchill & Roosevelt. Vol. II. p. 43). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In a correspondence with Stalin, when discussing the place of what would later be the Tehran Conference, Churchill again mentions Cyprus (along with Khartoum) as his preferred meeting place, but did not press for it (from a letter dated 10 September 1943). See: Pechatnov VO, Magadeev IE, Correspondence. T. 1. p. 558. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Another option for a trilateral meeting to be held in Iceland was casually mentioned during talks between Churchill and Stalin in Moscow in August 1942. In correspondence with Roosevelt, in November, the Prime Minister tried to convince the President to agree to Iceland, but Roosevelt, in a letter to Stalin (dated 2 December 1942), made it clear that he did not agree to it. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)