WAR CABINET

W.M. (43) 169th conclusions, minute 2

[13 December 1943 – 5.30 p.m. (26)]

Confidential Annex

[THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS:]

The Conference at Teheran had opened with a request from Marshal Stalin that our plans should be unfolded. The President had then given him an exposition of the Far Eastern situation, after which Stalin had given a most interesting account of the situation on the Russian Front where he intended to maintain the pressure throughout the winter, after which a heavy offensive would be launched in the spring. The Anglo-American plans not having been agreed, we were placed in the unfortunate position of having to discuss matters with the Americans in front of the Russians, and of having to express our dissent from an American proposal that OVERLORD, ANVIL[[1]](#footnote-1) and BUCCANEER[[2]](#footnote-2) should all be carried out in the spring of 1944. The Prime Minister displayed great patience in this awkward circumstances, and before the discussions terminated a reasonable solution had been secured. The details had been left to be thrashed out on return to Cairo[[3]](#footnote-3). Throughout these discussions the attitude of Marshal Stalin had been most co-operative and friendly, and there had been no retrogression from the position reached in the negotiations in Moscow. Every evening there had been an opportunity for intimate discussions on all kinds of political and military topics, and the Prime Minister and Marshal Stalin had established excellent relations.

[…]

At the Teheran Conference one point of great interest had emerged, namely, the Field Marshal Stalin had been extremely critical of the French. He had been very unfavourably impressed by M. Bergeret[[4]](#footnote-4), who had been French Ambassador at Moscow earlier in the war. He said that the French had not really tried hard in this war, and he obviously regarded the state of France as rotten[[5]](#footnote-5). He and President Roosevelt had been of the same mind in thinking that France should not have all her possessions restored to her. Thus President Roosevelt seemed to have in his mind the idea that the United States might take over Dakar, and that it would be a good thing if we take over Bizerte.

THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS then gave an account of the discussions about the boundaries of Poland.

The Foreign Secretary said that Field Marshal Stalin had stated that the Russians wished to send a Mission to Tito[[6]](#footnote-6); and had even suggested that is might be desirable to send one to General Mihailovich. They were anxious to find out the true position, but made it clear that they wished to work with us in this matter. Apparently the Russians had not so far had an accredited representative with Tito; there, however, had been wireless communication, and there had been some escaped Russian prisoners with Tito’s forces.

The Foreign Secretary said that he proposed in the House of Commons on the following day to say that the Government must be allowed to handle Balkan questions with our Allies, as they thought right[[7]](#footnote-7); and that impossible situation would arise if full play was allowed to personal preferences and sympathies for particular leaders or Balkan parties.

[…]

[TNA, CAB 65/40]

Keywords: France, Poland, Yugoslavia, Balkans

1. ‘Anvil’ - plan to invade southern France (later the plan was renamed the ‘Dragoon’). This invasion, which was to be conducted by the Free French forces and the Americans, was opposed by the British military and Churchill in 1944, who wished to focus on Italy and the Balkans (Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin*, p.344-346). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. "Buccaneer" – plan for the joint Anglo-American invasion of the Andaman Islands, to the south of Burma. Roosevelt promised to support Chiang Kai-shek, but Churchill refused to participate in the invasion. Ultimately, Roosevelt gave way, and the plan was abandoned (Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin*, p.249-251). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The meeting between Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek, accompanied by their military personnel, took place before the Tehran Conference and continued after it’s conclusion. It was expected that Molotov would also be present, but in the end, when it became known that the Chinese were going to be there, the People's Commissar did not take part. Although Chiang Kai-shek was unable to gain British support for the ‘Buccaneer’ plan, China strengthened its foreign policy position and he was promised a place in the future organization, which would later take shape of the UN Security Council. An agreement was also reached that Japan should lose its imperial possessions, and that Manchuria, Formosa (Taiwan) and that the Pescadores must be separated from the Republic of China (Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin*, p.246-53). See: Foreign relations of the United States (hereinafter - FRUS). Diplomatic papers. The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943. Washington, 1961. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. «Mr. Bergeret », as in the text, referred to Bergery, Gaston (1892 - 1974) - French diplomat, Ambassador of the "Vichy" government to the USSR (April - June 1941). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Stalin  expressed his critical attitude towards France to Lieutenant General H. Ismay during the Moscow conference in 1941. Commenting on the view that the UK should have a conscription army in peacetime, Stalin referred to the fact that "there will always be 'Pétains' in France and therefore no reliance can be placed in the future on the French army or people” (Report by Ismay, 06/10 / 1941 (in: WP (41) 238, Enclosure II) // TNA, CAB 66/19. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Tito, Josip Broz (1892 - 1980) - Yugoslav government, military and political leader, Marshall, chairman of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (1937 - 1980, from 1952 - the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia), the supreme commander of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (1941 - 1945), chairman of the National Committee of liberation of Yugoslavia (1943 - 1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In his speech in the Parliament, on 14 December, Eden formulated three principles that guided the proposed Balkan policy: to provide assistance to the forces fighting against Germany; give countries the freedom to choose their own government after liberation; "to work in the closest possible concert with our Allies” (Hansard. Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons). Vol. 395. Col. 1433. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)