The telegram of Soviet Ambassador to the UK, F.T. Gusev, sent to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 1943 (received on 19 October).

On 18 October at 10 am, Cadogan’s secretary called at the embassy and informed me that Churchill wanted to see me at his [office] today at 3pm. Churchill received me at his office in Downing Street. At first glance, Churchill’s watery eyes gave me the impression that he was drunk, and in the course of the conversation this was confirmed as such, since he reeked of wine. He, indeed, was drunk. Upon meeting me and giving the usual greeting, Churchill sat me down at the table and smoking a cigar, said the following:

“I wish and strive for the establishment of the closest of friendly relations between the USSR and Great Britain in the spirit of the agreement we have concluded 20 years after the war. I also strive to ensure that relations between the USSR and the USA improve. The meeting of the three Ministers in Moscow will contribute to this, but I do not think that it would be [possible] to discuss specific military questions at the meeting.”

When I remarked that, as Germany is now experiencing great difficulty caused by defeats inflicted by the Red Army on the Eastern Front and the Allied armies in Italy, that it is necessary to coordinate Allied military strikes in order to accelerate the victory over the enemy, Churchill replied: “I have already proposed to convene a meeting between military experts, who could calculate our forces, which would then make it clear what opportunities there are for such urgent demands for a second front. I hope,” Churchill continued, “at the next meeting with Marshal Stalin, to explain to him and to discuss frankly all issues with him. A telegraph correspondence is not conducive to a frank discussion of the issues. I received Stalin's message with great pain and want to return it to you[[1]](#footnote-1). I cannot accept it. I have entrusted Eden in Moscow to explain everything orally[[2]](#footnote-2).”

After these words, Churchill took out an unsealed envelope from a stack of papers that was laying in front of him and put it in front of me. On the envelope was written my address. I asked Churchill what was contained in this package. He reiterated that he is returning to me the only document that I have handed over to him in all this time, as he cannot accept it.

I noticed that this document was not handed over to me, instead to the charge d'affaires, Sobolev[[3]](#footnote-3), because by this time I had not yet had time to present letter of credence. I opened the envelope and showed the covering letter from 14 October to Sobolev. In the envelope was Comrade Stalin’s message and Sobolev’s cover letter to Cadogan. Churchill said nothing and stood up. I put the package on the table, where Churchill was sitting, saying that I cannot accept it, as the charge d'affaires was entrusted to pass this message to Churchill, which he did, and now it's Churchill’s business to do with it what he deems necessary.

“I understand you”, Churchill said, “but I cannot take this letter and return it to you. I have instructed Eden to verbally explain everything”. In saying this, Churchill took the package from the table and began to escort me [out of his office]. On the way to the door, Churchill said that his wife[[4]](#footnote-4) is very interested in the Soviet Union and had carried out a lot of work for a fundraising foundation to help us, and wishes to see me. I passed on my thanks to Churchill's wife, and expressed confidence that soon I will be able to see her.

At the door, Churchill shook my hand and literally shoved the package in my hand, turned around and headed for the table. The package stayed with me and in such a circumstance, I had not considered it necessary to talk once again to Churchill or through his Secretaries to return to him this package.

No notes were made in the letter and in the cover letter. On the first page of the letter in the upper right corner portion of the paper has been cut off halfway down the page, apparently with Cadogan’s notes or suggestions.

I ask for your guidance.

18 / X-1943 Gusev

[FPARF, f. 059, inv. 10, fold. 8, file 62, pp. 74-77]

Keywords: Inter-allied relations, second front

1. Reference to Stalin's letter dated 13 October (passed on to Churchill through Cadogan on 15 October), in which, for the first time, he replied in harsh tone to Churchill’s letter (dated 1 October) on the resumption of convoys to the Soviet Union and the increase of British personnel in the Far North. For more see: Pechatnov V.O., Magadeyev I.E. Perepiska. T. 1. p. 588–593. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Eden tried to defuse the tension created by the exchange of messages with a personal meeting with Stalin in Moscow on 21 October. See: Moskovskaya konferentsiya. p. 120–123. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sobolev, Arkady (1903 - 1964) - Soviet diplomat, Secretary General of the People's Commissariat (1939-1940), Counsellor of the Embassy of the USSR in the UK (1942-1945), Assistant to the UN Secretary General and Head of the Department of Political Affairs and the UN Security Council (1946-1949), head of the UN Department of Affairs (1949-1950), head of the US Department in the Foreign Ministry of the USSR (1950-1951), Soviet Ambassador to Poland (1951-1953). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Churchill, Clementine (née Hozier) (1885 – 1977) – wife of W.S. Churchill, chairman of the Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund (1941 – 1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)