From British Ambassador to the USSR, A. Kerr’s report sent to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, A. Eden, dated 4 December 1944 (received on 19 December).

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a review of the chief events in the Soviet Union during 1943. This report, the completion of which has been delayed owing to the pressure of current work, has been written by Mr. Balfour[[1]](#footnote-1), His Majesty’s Minister, with the exception of the section on domestic affairs and the appendix dealing with Red Army operations, for which I am respectively indebted to Mr. Thomas Brimelow[[2]](#footnote-2), third secretary to this embassy, and the military mission.

I have, &c.

ARCHIBALD CLARK KERR

Enclosure.

[…]

*Political Review of Events in the Soviet Union during* *1943*

*Introduction*.

[1.]. THE year 1943 marked a major turning-point not only of the war on the Soviet-German front but also in the relations of the Soviet Union with its Allies. In the military field, the outstanding events which are recorded in an appendix[[3]](#footnote-3), the year, which opened with the resounding victory at Stalingrad, saw the initiative pass from the Germans to the Red Army and the loss by the former of two-thirds of the Soviet territory which they had occupied since June 1941. In the political field the Moscow and Tehran Conferences laid the foundations for closer collaboration, both during and after the war, between the Soviet Union and her major Allies.

2. In the domestic sphere the movement to restore traditional values, which gained momentum from the beginning of the war, moved at an altogether accelerated pace. Developments in this respect, which will be described below, served the purpose of stimulating Soviet patriotism and of strengthening loyalty to the State and its institutions. Whatever the ultimate significance of these developments, it was evident that they had not resulted during the year in any alteration in the alignment of forces in the U.S.S.R. Whilst the Red Army grew in stature and prestige, it seemed equally clear that it was more closely associated than ever with the régime, the position of which, in turn became stronger in proportion as the tide turned towards victory. The Communist party continued to maintain a monopoly of political initiative and control and, towering above its other leaders, Stalin, who in March assumed the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, was widely venerated as a national saviour.

3. The key-note of the year was a reawakened spirit of national self-confidence, which became more marked as the panorama of victory unfolded itself. Along with this spirit there could be discerned a growing war-weariness and a popular longing for the end of the war, which had laid waste vast areas of the Soviet Union and brought death and misery to many millions of its citizens.

Section I. – *General Survey of Foreign Relations*.

[…]

(a) *Developments before the Moscow Conference*.

5. Throughout this period the question of the opening of military operations in Western Europe – the so-called “second front” – continued, as in 1942 to colour the relations of the Soviet Government with her Allies. As confirmed realists, the rulers of Soviet Russia were inclined to doubt the good faith of Allies who had not yet engaged in military action on a scale satisfactory to the Soviet Union, Until June, however, their impatience at the delay in beginning operations in Western Europe was tempered by the firm expectation, based on Allied assurances, that the invasion would materialise by early autumn at latest. Soviet dissatisfaction with us during the first quarter of the year appeared, indeed, to be as much due to inability to appreciate the reasons for postponing operations to expel the Germans from North Africa, as from reasons connected with the absence of a “second front”.

[…]

8. Allied successes in Tunisia and the intensive bombing of Germany led in April to a distinct improvement in the atmosphere. In a message to the Prime Minister on the 7th April Marshal Stalin expressed lively satisfaction at the bombing of Berlin, Kiel and other industrial centres. The Soviet press published articles during the month, which referred in cordial terms to the Anglo-American contribution to the combined war effort. The film “Desert Victory” was widely shown in Moscow and elsewhere to audiences who were deeply impressed[[4]](#footnote-4). The May Day slogans of the Communist party contained two friendly references to the Allies[[5]](#footnote-5). Marshal Stalin paid war tribute to Anglo-American aid in his May Day Order[[6]](#footnote-6). After the liberation of Tunis and Bizerta Marshal Stalin sent a message of cordial congratulations to the Prime Minister, and the Allied victory in North Africa was commented upon most appreciatively in the press of the 8th and 9th May[[7]](#footnote-7). On the 19th May Mr. Joseph Davies[[8]](#footnote-8) arrived in Moscow as the special envoy of President Roosevelt and bearing a personal letter from him, which he delivered to Marshal Stalin. A dinner was given in his honour at the Kremlin on the 23rd May[[9]](#footnote-9). General Martel[[10]](#footnote-10), head of the British Military Mission, paid a week’s visit to the front from which he returned on the 19th May[[11]](#footnote-11).

9. A development of the first importance occurred on the 22nd May, when publication was given to a resolution dated the 15th May, by which the Presidium of the Executive Council of the Communist International announced that the Third International had been dissolved as the directing centre of the international working class movement. Although it had been generally recongnised that the Comintern had long since been in a moribund condition, its mere existence had served as an element of mistrust in the relations of the Soviet Government with its Western Allies. The formal dissolution of an organisation which had become something of an international embarrassment to a régime convinced of its own strength and leaning more and more towards nationalism, thus provided an encouraging sign that the Soviet Government desired to improve its relations with Great Britain and the United States. Although only time can reveal whether Communist groups in foreign countries will cease to serve as an instrument to the Soviet Union for the achievement of its aims, the decision is understood to have come as something of a shock to many convinced party members[[12]](#footnote-12). […]

13. Early in June the bitter disappointment of the Soviet Government at the postponement of the date for the invasion of Europe was reflected in a renewed press campaign on the subject, which gathered momentum until is reached its peak on the 1st August, when *War and Working Class[[13]](#footnote-13)* published a long leading article containing the following themes subsequently developed by Soviet newspapers until shortly before the opening of the Moscow Conference: the risk of missing the second front; the obligation of the Allies to open a second front; the necessity of not prolonging the war; the anxiety to prevent further loss of life; the possibility of ending the war in 1943; the vulnerability of the Atlantic Wall[[14]](#footnote-14); and the overcoming of the shortage of shipping. This article also reminded its readers that in June 1942 British and American communiqués had announced that full agreement had been reached on measures necessary for the opening of a second front in 1942, and it pointed out that, after the Casablanca meeting in January 1943, Mr. Churchill had stated that the Allies had a plan of action which would be carried out in the course of next nine months. It implied that the Allies lacked the determination to finish the war quickly, and insinuated that the delay might be due in part to the activities of small by influential groups of profit-makers and reactionaries.

[…]

(b) The Moscow and Tehran Conferences.

[…]

20. The conference, which lasted from 19th to the 30th October, was an unqualified success. Views were exchanged on a large number of strategic and political questions and machinery was devised for considering the political aspect of these problems in more detail. The chief results, made public in a communiqué on the 1st November, were a Four-Power Declaration signed by the three Foreign Secretaries and by the Chinese Ambassador at Moscow[[15]](#footnote-15) on behalf of his Government which set forth the principles upon which the four Governments agreed to collaborate both during and after the war; the establishment – superseding the earlier Soviet proposal for a politico-military commission – of a European Advisory Commission to examine European questions arising as the war developed and of an advisory council for matters relating to Italy to be composed in the first instance of representatives of the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States, and of the French Committee of National Liberation, with the supplementary addition of representatives of Greece and Yugoslavia. Two declarations were also made public by the three Foreign Secretaries, the one reaffirming the attitude of their Governments in favour of the re-establishment of democracy in Italy, and the other announcing it to be their purpose to restore the independence of Austria. Lastly, publication was given to a document signed by President Roosevelt, Marshal Stalin and Mr. Churchill[[16]](#footnote-16) which condemned Hitlerite atrocities in the strongest possible terms and warned German officers and men, and Nazi party members who had taken part in them that, at the time of granting an armistice to any German Government, they would be taken back to the countries in which their crimes had been committed to be judged and punished according to its laws.

21. Over and above its concrete results, the conference went far towards dispelling the atmosphere of mistrust which had previously prevailed. The Russians were deeply impressed by the fact that two Foreign Secretaries of the prestige of Mr. Eden and Mr. Hull had visited the capital of their country for a full-dress conference, The Soviet Government now felt that they had been freely admitted on terms of complete equality to the intimate council of their Allies[[17]](#footnote-17). The outcome of the conference was warmly welcomed in the Soviet Union as in the other Allied countries, the leading Moscow newspapers giving full weight to the Anglo-American military contribution towards shortening war …

22. The ground was thus prepared for the meeting between the leaders of the three Allied Powers which took place from the 18th[[18]](#footnote-18) November to the 1st December. The public declaration issued after this historic conference, which served its major purpose of concerting the military plans of the three Allies including “the scope and timing of operations which will be undertaken from the east, west and south,” reasserted the supreme responsibility of American, Britain and the Soviet Union for the preservation of world peace and welcomed for this purpose the co-operation of all States prepared “to come into a world family of democratic nations.” The declaration concluded: “We came here with hope and determination. We leave here friends in fact, spirit and in purpose.” In a communiqué of the 6th December, signed by Marshal Stalin, President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, the three Governments announced their desire for the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Persia[[19]](#footnote-19) and undertook to render her such economic assistance as was compatible with other demands upon the Allies.

23. Publicity given to the conference in the Moscow press and reports received of the keen interest displayed in it by all sections of the Soviet public left no doubt that it had aroused great satisfaction in the U.S.S.R. The imagination of the public was stirred by the fact that, for the first time since he had assumed power, Stalin had absented himself from the Soviet Union to take part in a goodwill meeting with the leaders of the two major Allied Powers. The fact that the authorities should have organised subsequent publicity on a wide scale – meetings at which party workers explained the importance of the event took place in army units and factories throughout the country – persuaded the average Soviet citizen that the Anglo-American Allies were at one with their country in the desire to hasten the final overthrow of the enemy. Opportunity was incidentally taken during the visit of Marshal Stalin and Mr. Churchill to Tehran to present to the former His Majesty The King’s Sword of Honour to the inhabitants of Stalingrad[[20]](#footnote-20).

(c) *Developments subsequent to the Moscow and Tehran Conferences*.

Although many problems of common concern, beginning with that of Poland, still remained unsolved, the Moscow and Tehran Conferences had thus laid most promising foundations for wide future collaboration between the three Great Powers upon whom rested the responsibility for ensuring victory and a permanent peace. Signs of the improved atmosphere were provided by three references to the Anglo-American Allies in the party slogans published in connection with the anniversary of the revolution on the 7th November[[21]](#footnote-21). In his speech on this occasion Marshal Stalin paid generous tribute to Allied military aid and, after referring to the “historic decisions of the Moscow Conference,” declared that, although present operations in Southern Europe could not be regarded as a second front, the opening of a real second front was not “beyond the hills.”[[22]](#footnote-22) The Prime Minister’s speech of the 9th November and Mr. Eden’s of the 11th November were reproduced at length in the Soviet press[[23]](#footnote-23). After the exchange of telegrams by Mr. Cordell Hull and M. Molotov on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the U.S.S.R., articles appeared in the Moscow press on the 16th and 17th November emphasizing the community of economic interests between the two countries. A strong Soviet delegation attended the U.N.R.R.A.[[24]](#footnote-24) conference at Atlantic City in November, although it did not take a very active part in the proceedings[[25]](#footnote-25). With M. Vyshinski as the Soviet representative, the Advisory Council for Italy held its first meeting on the 30th November in a friendly atmosphere.

25. Apart from its attitude towards the Polish problem… the Soviet Union continued during the last part of the year to show that, whilst subscribing to the broad principles on inter-Allied collaboration achieved by the Moscow and Tehran Conferences, it was also closely concerned to promote its own security interests and to join violent issue with critics of its policy. Thus the press was at pains to affirm the Soviet position that the Baltic States are part of the U.S.S.R. and an article in *The War and Working Class* in December not only denounced *émigré* circles in the United States, for their attitude on this question but also criticized the past policy of the United States Government. Press condemnation of the Finnish Government noticeably increased towards the end of the year and in December the Finns were bitterly attacked for having collaborated with the Germans in the shelling of Leningrad.

[…]

31. The process of substituting Soviet patriotism for world revolutionary ideas, of which a number of signs had been provided during the year, beginning with the dissolution of the Comintern in May, was again marked by the announcement of Moscow radio on the 20th December that the “Internationale” had been replaced by a new traditional anthem to come into effect on the 15th March, 1944. The announcement declared that the “Internationale” “does not reflect in its contents the fundamental changes which have taken place as a result of the success of the Soviet order.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

32. During the year the Soviet Government greatly extended its diplomatic relations with other countries, and missions were exchanged or foreshadowed with Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Egypt, Ethiopia, Cuba, Colombia, Uruguay and Mexico. The Soviet Government also arranged to exchange ambassadors with all countries with which it had formerly exchanged ministers, with the exception of Australia, Bulgaria, Cuba and Sweden, by whom, in the last-named case, an offer to exchange ambassadors was refused on the ground that it would be a departure from normal Swedish practice. Admiral Standley[[27]](#footnote-27) resigned from his post as United States Ambassador in September, and his place was taken Mr. Averell Harriman, who arrived at Moscow with the United States Delegation to the conference. On the 10th December it was announced that the Canadian Legation in the U.S.S.R. and the Soviet Legation in Canada had been raised to the status of embassies. […]

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Keywords: Comintern, Tehran conference, second front, Baltic states

1. Balfour, John (‘Jock’) (1894 – 1983) – British diplomat, Minister in British Embassy in Moscow (1943 – 1945), Minister in British Embassy in Washington (1945 – 1948). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Brimelow, Thomas (1915 – 1995) – British diplomat, third secretary of the British Embassy in Moscow (1942 – 1945), Minister in the British Embassy in Moscow (1963 – 1966), Ambassador to Poland (1966 – 1969), Permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office (1973 – 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Not included. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The film made an impression on Stalin. See: Pechatnov V.O., Magadeyev I.E. Perepiska. T. 1. p. 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The slogans read: " Long live the victory of the Anglo-Soviet-American fighting alliance against the enemies of humanity - the fascist oppressors!” and “Hail to the valiant Anglo-American troops, who are smashing the German and Italian fascists in North Africa" (*Pravda*. 25.IV.1943). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In an order dated 1 May 1943. Stalin, pointing to the Soviet military successes, added: "At the same time as this, the victorious troops of our Allies defeated the Italo-German troops in the area of ​​Libya and Tripolitania, and having cleared these areas of enemies and they now continue to smashing [them] in the Tunis area, while the valiant Anglo-American aviation deals crushing blows to the military-industrial centres in Germany, Italy, heralding the formation of a second front in Europe against the Italo-German fascists" (*Pravda*. 1.V.1943). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Similar messages by Stalin to Churchill and Roosevelt, dated 8 May (Pechatnov V.O., Magadeyev I.E. Perepiska. T. 1. pp. 455–456). On 9 May they were published on the front page of *Pravda* (*Pravda*. 9.V.1943). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Davies, Joseph Edward (1876 – 1958) – U.S. statesman and politician, Special Envoy of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman (1943 – 1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. On a copy of the menu of this very exquisite dinner is a rare handwritten note by Stalin: “On 23 May 1943, I, together with Mr Davis drank to the health of the President of the United States" (Pechatnov V.O., Magadeyev I.E. Perepiska. T. 1. p. 480). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Martel, Giffard Le Quesne (1889 – 1958) – British Lieutenant-General, head of the British Military Mission in Moscow (1943 – 1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. General Martel, who arrived in the USSR with Churchill’s personal recommendation (in the form of letters to Stalin on 27 March), was soon rewarded with a personal meeting with Stalin (12 April), and then with Marshal Vasilevsky (21 April). Shortly after the last meeting, he was given a very rare opportunity for a foreign observer to visit the Soviet-German front in the region of Kursk and Orel. The trip lasted from 11 to 19 May and is described in Martel’s memoirs (Martel G. le Q. *The Russian Outlook*. London, 1947. p. 47-60). See also: Searle A. *Uneasy Intelligence Collaboration, Genuine Ill Will, with an Admixture of Ideology: The British Military Mission to the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* // *Military Advising and Assistance: From Mercenaries to Privatization, 1815 - 2007* / Ed. by D. Stocker. London, 2008. P. 68-69 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. At the 21 May meeting of the Politburo of the CPSU (b) this point of view was given voice to, oddly enough, by the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, M.I. Kalinin, who was not inclined to protest. According to a diary entry by G. Dimitrov, "[Kalin [in] remarks that our enemies will take advantage of this step. It would be better to make attempts to transfer CI center to some other place - London, for instance! (Laughter.)] (*The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933-1949* / Ed. By I. Banac. New Haven, 2003. p. 275). Of course, such a proposal was not accepted. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Socio-political magazine, founded in June 1943, published fortnightly. On its pages were actively discussed current international political issues and post-war problems. British historian J. Roberts sees the creation of the magazine as a manifestation of "Stalin's growing interest in the project of preparing and planning for the post-war world” (Roberts G. *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* New Haven; London, 2006. p. 174). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. German system of permanent fortifications built on the European Atlantic coast during 1942-1944 (from France to Scandinavia). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Fu Bingchang (1896 – 1965) – Chinese diplomat, Chinese Ambassador to the USSR (1943 – 1949). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The Moscow Declaration of 1943 (official title: Declaration on the accountability of Nazis atrocities committed). The document was not actually signed by the leaders of the "Big Three", but was published on their behalf. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Similar ideas had already appeared in one of the first telegrams, summarizing the results of the conference, which Kerr sent from Moscow on 6 November 1943 (From Moscow to Foreign Office, 06/11/1943 // TNA, FO 371/37031). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. As written in the text. Should be 28th. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. This refers to the "Declaration of the three powers on Iran," signed at the Tehran Conference. Regarding the name of the country (Persia or Iran), a small debate broke out between Churchill and Stalin at the end of the conference. See: FRUS. The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943. p. 838. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. On 21 February 1943, King George VI mentioned to Kalinin, the nominal head of the Soviet state that he had issued an order for a special sword in honour of the people of Stalingrad to be made (SANO. T. 1. p. 342). Details of the awarding ceremony were later discussed between Eden and Molotov in Moscow (RGASPI. F. 558. Op. 11. D. 218. L. 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The slogans read: "Long live the victory of the Anglo-Soviet-American fighting alliance against the worst enemies of humanity - the fascist oppressors! All forces and combat power of freedom-loving peoples for the rapid defeat of Nazi Germany!”; “Hail to the valiant Anglo-American troops, leading the fight against the German fascists in Italy!”; “Hail to the pilots of the Anglo-American air force, striking at vital centres of Nazi Germany!" (*Pravda*. 30.X.1943). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Stalin's report of 6 November. See: Sovetsko-amerikanskiye otnosheniya vo vremya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny, 1941 – 1945. T. 1. M., 1983. T. 1. p. 429–432. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See: *Pravda*, 11 and 12 November. Among other signs of warming relations with the Allies that were reflected in the Soviet press were the *Pravda* editorial (17.XI.1943) “Desyatiletiye ustanovleniya diplomaticheskikh otnosheniy SSHА i SSSR"; a note on the state of Churchill’s health (*Izvestiya* 24.XII.1943); Publication of a Christmas message to Roosevelt in Hyde Park (*Izvestiya*. 26.XII.1943). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. During the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers the Soviet side sought to ensure that the U.N.R.R.A mechanism was used primarily to provide assistance to United nations, while the US delegation, referring to the Atlantic Charter, wanted to give priority to countries that suffered most damage in the war with the ‘axis’ countries (АVP RF. F. 06. Op. 5-b. P. 41. D. 35. L. 26; Moskovskaya konferentsiya. p. 298–299, 330). Nevertheless, the Soviet Union was ready to cooperate with other United nations in the establishment of U.N.R.R.A. On 9 November, at a conference in Atlantic City (USA), the Soviet representative (Ambassador Andrei Gromyko), along with the representatives of 43 governments signed an agreement establishing U.N.R.R.A. (organization existed until 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. As stated in the resolution of the CPSU (b) of 25 September, "the current national anthem of the Soviet Union ‘The Internationale’ does not correspond to the position of the Soviet state" (RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 163. D. 1380. L. 9). Eventually, the new text of the anthem was adopted on 14 December 1943 (Ibid. D. 1385. L. 158). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Standley, William Harrison (1872 – 1963) – U.S. admiral and diplomat, U.S. Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. (1942 – 1943). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)