[An extract] from a draft telegram on the outcome of the Tehran Conference from the USSR’s People's Commissariat on Foreign Affair with corrections by Chairman of the Council of Ministers, I.V. Stalin, dated 10 December 1943.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The following is a summary of the individual questions under discussion at the conference in Tehran.

1. Military issues. Initially, Roosevelt and Churchill refused to specify the starting date of ‘Operation Overlord’. At the same time, Churchill pointed out the need to continue the Anglo-American operation in Italy for the purpose of occupying Rome and for the further advancement towards the Pisa-Rimini line, since the shortage of facilities are supposedly causing the delay of ‘Overlord’ by one, two or three months. That is, until the end of summer.[[2]](#footnote-2) In addition, Churchill said that the British have proposed to carry out other operations in the Mediterranean Sea, which will require the use of landing crafts. Roosevelt, though not directly supporting Churchill regarding the operations in the Mediterranean Sea, but just as well pointed out that due to lack of landing facilities, ‘Overlord’ may have to be postponed.

Comrade Stalin pointed out that we consider operation ‘Overlord’, as the primary operation and insist it be carried out in time. With respect to operations in the Mediterranean, comrade Stalin said that we give them a [secondary] (*auxiliary*) importance and that they can only be regarded as diversionary.[[3]](#footnote-3) Comrade Stalin proposed switching to a defensive [strategy] in Italy by using the liberated forces there for an amphibious landing in Southern France possibly before the start of ‘Operation Overlord’.[[4]](#footnote-4)

As a result of the discussion on this question, and after pressure from our side, Churchill and Roosevelt declared that the "Overlord" operation will be undertaken in the exactly specified month in the spring of 1944[[5]](#footnote-5) and will be carried out as an operation against Southern France. For his part, comrade Stalin said that the Soviet forces take the offensive at about the same time in order to prevent the redeployment of German forces from the Eastern to the Western Front.

Next was discussed Turkey’s entry into the war. The Conference recognized the need to invite Turkey to join the war this year. We declared that, if Turkey declares war on Germany – [resulting in] Bulgaria joining Germany against Turkey – then the Soviet Union will declare war on Bulgaria. It was decided that Churchill, Roosevelt and Comrade Vyshinsky, as the representative of the USSR, are to meet in Cairo with Turkish President Inonu[[6]](#footnote-6), who will be given invitation for Turkey to enter the war, as early as this year.

It was also agreed upon that the Yugoslav partisans must be supported with arms and provisions.

In accordance with the military decisions, a protocol was drawn up, which was endorsed by Comrade Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill.

2. When discussing the question of Finland, Roosevelt expressed dissatisfaction about the 1939 Soviet-Finnish border, and how it did not ensure security of the USSR. He recognized the need to move the border away from Leningrad. Churchill said that he attached importance to ensuring the security of Leningrad, as well as ensuring the USSR's position as the dominant power in the Baltic Sea. However, he said that in England it would be considered a great misfortune if the Finns were to be subordinated to another country against their will. Churchill opposed the Soviet Union punitive reparations on Finland after the war, and even hinted at the desirability of a softer approach towards Finland. Roosevelt and Churchill were interested in our terms and conditions for peace with Finland.

Comrade Stalin replied that, we believe that the 1940 Soviet-Finnish peace treaty needs to be restored, but admitted that the Soviet Union may agree to the Petsano region being annexed to the Soviet Union[[7]](#footnote-7), instead of leasing Hanko. In addition, Finland has to compensate in kind to half of the damages caused to the Soviet Union, to break with Germany and expel Germans from its territory, to demobilize its army and fulfil certain other conditions. However, in Comrade. Stalin’s opinion, the present Finnish rulers do not want serious peace negotiations with the Soviet Union, because among them prevails a faction that still believes in a German victory.

Roosevelt agreed with Comrade Stalin and said that in order for Finland to withdraw from the war, it is best to seek changes in the composition of the Finnish government.

3. Roosevelt and Churchill sounded out the question of restoring relations between the USSR and Polpra (i.e. Polish government. - Ed.) in London, and raised the question of our borders with Poland. In a conversation with Comrade Stalin, Roosevelt said that he personally had no objections to the Poland’s eastern borders being pushed back and extended in the western borders up to the Oder. However, he is unable to participate in the resolution of the Soviet-Polish border question, since he does not want to lose the Polish vote in the upcoming US presidential elections. Churchill said that he hoped for Poland to take up the territory between the Curzon line and the Oder line, with the inclusion of East Prussia as part of its territory. Churchill said that if this proposal is acceptable to the Soviet government, he would be ready to appeal to the Poles and demand that they accept the offer.

Comrade Stalin replied that the Soviet Union backs the restoration and strengthening of Poland at the expense of Germany. However, we distinguish Poland from exiled Polish governments in London, whose agents in Poland have ties to the Germans and kill Polish partisans. We want to have a guarantee that the Polish government in exile will not kill partisans in Poland, and will call on Polish people to engage in an active struggle against the Germans. If the exiled Polish government in London is in solidarity with the guerrillas, and if we have a guarantee that it will not be associated with the German agents, then we are ready to start talks with it about restoring relations. Referring to Churchill’s proposal on the Polish borders, Comrade Stalin said that he agrees with these proposals, if England agrees to the handing over of German ice-free ports on the Baltic Sea to the USSR – which includes Konigsberg and Memel[[8]](#footnote-8) with the corresponding part of East Prussian territory.

[...]

5. During the exchange of views, Churchill said that Russia should have access to the southern ports and if Britain initially had objections to this, it now has none. Comrade Stalin said that this is the right idea, but that the question of the southern ports can be discussed sometime later. In this regard, Comrade Stalin pointed out that such a country as big as the Soviet Union should not be shut in in the Black Sea, and that it is therefore necessary to revise the regulations on the Straits. Churchill agreed, but said that because he now decided to invite Turkey to join the war, he considers it inopportune to now raise the question of the Straits. Comrade Stalin reserved the right to revisit this issue.

6. At the initiative of Roosevelt, the question of post-war Germany was raised. Roosevelt made a proposal to dismember Germany into five independent states ... Churchill was less decisive on this issue. He called for the separation of Prussia, whose existence as part of Germany had always been, in his words, "the root of evil". On the other hand, he proposed to separate Germany from its southern provinces, including Bavaria, and incorporate them into a Danubian Federation that would also include Austria and Hungary. [[9]](#footnote-9) Comrade Stalin said that, in order to weaken Germany, the Soviet government prefers it to be dismembered. Comrade Stalin responded positively to Roosevelt's plan, without deciding beforehand on the number of countries that Germany should be broken up into. He opposed Churchill's plan to establish after Germany’s break up non-viable state associations, such as the Danubian Federation. Comrade Stalin said that he hoped that Austria and Hungary were [left to be] separate states.

After an exchange of opinions on the question of Germany, it was decided that it be passed on for analysis to the Advisory Commission in London.

7. During the exchange of opinion about France, comrade Stalin said that there are currently two Frances: a symbolic one - as represented by de Gaulle,[[10]](#footnote-10) and the actual one - in the name of Laval[[11]](#footnote-11), Petain[[12]](#footnote-12) and others - that is assisting the Germans. Several sects of the French nation and the ruling circles in France want to be smarter than everyone else and are thinking of deceiving the Allies. They seem to think that the Allies will offer them France on a plate, and do not want to fight on the Allied side, and instead prefer to cooperate with the Germans. As for the French nation, it is enticed by a kind of peace, the state of which France finds itself in. The actual France that is collaborating with the Germans should [*be punished*] (bear the responsibility for their pro-German actions). With regard to the French Empire, Comrade Stalin pointed out that he cannot imagine that the Allies shed their blood for the liberation of the Indo-China to only have Indo-China handed over to the French so they can restore the old colonial regime there. Representatives of the wealthy classes in France are steadfast in their view that France should not go along with Britain and the United States, and their allies in the previous World War but, instead with [its enemies in the last World War, including] Germany. Under these conditions, it cannot be guaranteed, if strategically important parts of the French empire remain in the hands of the French after the present war that they would not be used by the allies of Germany and Japan in the event of their attempts to start a new war. To prevent this from happening, these strategic parts need to be [*occupied*] (taken control of) by an international organization created to maintain peace. Comrade Stalin also reacted positively to Roosevelt's proposal to organize an international trusteeship over Indo-China.

Roosevelt declared, that it will be many years before France is reborn as a Great Power. He is sympathetic to Comrade Stalin’s idea [*the feasibility of the occupying Allied forces managing the strategically important parts of the French Empire*]. Churchill [*is of the opinion that France will be fully reborn and will soon become a Great Power. With regards to occupying strategically important parts of the French Empire, Churchill said that in England - it's a difficult question, since France was England’s ally.*] did not object or objected very little.

8. In a conversation with Comrade Stalin, Roosevelt outlined his views on the international organizations which ought, in his opinion, to be established after the war. Roosevelt proposed the creation of three entities: 1) the overall organization, which would include all nations combined; 2) The Executive Committee, which would consist of 10 or 11 countries, including the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and China, two European countries, one Asian country, one of the English dominions, one of the Middle East, one of the South American countries. This committee would deal with all matters except for the military; 3) A Police Committee, which would consist of 4 countries: the USSR, the United States, Britain and China – which will work to prevent any danger of the peace being breached.

Comrade Stalin [*said that he considers Roosevelt’s scheme, in principle, acceptable, but since China cannot have real powers, in order to reinforce the requirement for any European country, Comrade Stalin proposed the creation of two organizations: one for Europe, which would include the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and perhaps even one of the European countries, and the second for the Far East, one in which China would also be included*] (had no objections).[[13]](#footnote-13)

[Roosevelt promised to consider the proposal]

Comrade Stalin further pointed out that the creation of such organizations is not enough. It is necessary that the established organization has the right to occupy strategically important points in order to keep Germany and Japan from having the opportunity to start a new aggression.

Roosevelt agreed to Comrade Stalin’s proposal. Churchill [*did not support this proposal, as well as*] (weakly opposing) Roosevelt’s (plan) for an international organization.

9. Roosevelt and Churchill could not give an answer to our question on handing over parts of the Italian Navy and merchant ships to us, if not to own, then to use. This was discussed, as far back as the Moscow Conference.[[14]](#footnote-14) Churchill and Roosevelt answered that they are for the transfer of Italian ships to us and that the ships will be transferred to us to towards the end of January 1944, since they must first settle this case with the Italians. In addition, Churchill said that if these Italian ships go into the Black Sea, to help us he would send there British ships and 4-5 submarines with British crews, as well. We agreed to this.

It is reported only for your own personal viewing.

[Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, f. 558, inv. 11, file 234, pp. 99-104]

Keywords: Tehran conference, second front, Finland, Poland, Turkey, post-war Germany, France, United Nations, Yugoslavia

1. In all likelihood, this document was drafted by Molotov. In the heading, there is an inscription: "To Comrade Stalin for approval". The final version of the telegram (with Stalin’s corrections accounted for) was sent on December 10 to Vyshinsky in Algeria, and to the Soviet Embassies in London and Washington. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. During a meeting with Eden in Moscow, on 27 October, when the latter read out a telegram about the delays of operations in Italy, Stalin commented that "operations across the Channel are being delayed by about two months" (Moscow Conference, p. 204). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Stalin crossed out the phrase shown in square brackets and made corrections - shown in italics in brackets. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The text starting with the word "reviewed" before the word "Overlord", was crossed by Stalin with a vertical line on the margin, with added comment in pencil “that’s not it”. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Due to the particular secrecy of what exactly was agreed to in Tehran, the month of the launch of "Overlord" (May) was not conveyed in a telegram. Apparently, in the beginning of 1944, Gusev was not informed of the exact agreed-upon start date of "Overlord", indicating that "there is an assumption that Tehran agreed-on launch for the opening of a second front, may have to be pushed back from March to April, perhaps even to May "(telegram dated 22 February 1944). See: AVP RF. F. 059. Op. 12. P. 39. D. 248. L. 168-171. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. İnönü, İsmet (1884 – 1973) – Turkish statesman, General, President of Turkey (1938 – 1950). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Part of the sentence starting from the word "USSR" to "instead" is highlighted with a wavy underline, and in the margin is Stalin's inscription: "Not it" [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Underlined by Stalin. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Stalin crossed out part of the sentence from the word "Churchill" with a vertical line on the margin, adding a comment, "Not it" [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Gaulle, Charles de (1890 - 1970) - French statesman and military leader, General, Chairman of the French Committee of National Liberation (1943 - 1944), chairman of the Provisional Government of the French Republic (1944 - 1946). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Laval, Pierre (1883 - 1945) - French statesman and politician, Prime-Minister of the French "Vichy" Government (1940, 1942 - 1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Philippe Pétain (1856 - 1951) - French statesman and military leader, Marshal, head of the collaborationist government of "Vichy" (1940 - 1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Stalin crossed out the entire paragraph with vertical line on the margin, adding a comment, "Not it". [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In the telegram from the People's Commissariat on the outcome of the Moscow conference in 1943, on this issue it was noted: "In connection with the discussion about Italy, the Soviet delegation, on behalf of the Soviet Government, submitted a proposal that the Soviet Union be immediately handed over 1 battleship, 1 cruiser, 8 destroyers, 4 submarines and merchant ships, as well as a total displacement of 40,000 tons. As stated by Churchill in the House of Commons, more than 100 warships and merchant ships with a displacement of more than 150,000 tonnes, have fallen into the disposal of Anglo-American armed forces ... Eden and Hull expressed a positive attitude to this proposal, but the final verdict from the British and American governments has not yet been received. (AP RF. F. 3. Op. 63. D. 233. L. 69). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)