Telegram of Soviet Ambassador to the UK, F.T. Gusev, to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, 22 February 1944 (received 23 February).

On February 22nd at 10 past 12, with MPs, newspaper correspondents, diplomats and guests overcrowding, Churchill spoke at the House of Commons, giving an overview of the military and international situation. Churchill's speech lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes and consisted of two different parts: the first on the military, and the other on the international situation. The full text of the speech is being circulated by TASS.

In the first part of the speech, Churchill had nothing to boast of, and he, in fact, defended and justified the Anglo-American troops trampling in a certain part of Italy. In this regard, Churchill underlined the total British losses during the war and the number of enemy ships and submarines sunk, in order to say that the UK fulfils its role and share in the war against the common enemy. In the same part of Churchill's speech where he talked about the upcoming big operations in Europe in the spring and summer, there is a certain reserve[[1]](#footnote-1) with which it’s possible to push back the agreed deadlines for the start of large operations to a later time. According to information from other sources, mainly from the US and British correspondents and from individuals, there are suggestions that the terms for a second front agreed in Tehran may have to be pushed back from March to April, and maybe to May. In December and January, the American and British correspondents, who have access to General Eisenhower’s headquarters, were intensely preparing themselves to support the troops in the invasion in the middle or second half of March. Now there is a lull among them, and they have begun to prepare themselves for April or mid-May. Journalists give this explanation: in late March and throughout April a season of bad roads sets it, and the Red Army cannot conduct active operations. The Germans can release reserves and reinforce the troops in France. At this time, the landing of Allied troops in Western Europe is fraught with great difficulties and dangers. Consequently, journalists have concluded that the Allies would land on the continent at the time when the Red Army would resume their offensive after the spring thaw. Such arguments, although in a more disguised form, can be found among politicians. For example, the other day I had a conversation with Ernest Bevin and Hore-Belisha[[2]](#footnote-2), and both were strongly interested in one question: for how long the Red Army would be able to conduct an offensive at the same pace as it has done to date. Soon the thaw will set in on our front. When I asked about how are the preparations for large operations coming along, they both answered evasively, with some reservations about the difficulties, links to weather, etc. All these evasive answers and the assumption of journalists regarding the postponement of the beginning of the big operations are not cleared up in Churchill’s speech. On the contrary, these doubts are reinforced by Churchill's statement about the upcoming spring and summer operations.

In the second part of the speech, Churchill's statement on Poland is a significant step forward. This is the first public recognition of our rights in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. How typical that at the moment when Churchill said that Britain went to war because of Poland from the Conservative benches loud cheers could be heard, and when he said that the Russians have the right to territory lying to the east of the Curzon Line an uproar of approval came from Labour and Liberal benches, as the Conservatives were silent. Churchill spoke of Marshal Tito with great enthusiasm,[[3]](#footnote-3) and sometimes his gestures and voice emphasized his admiration.

The second part of the speech Churchill made standing up, with conviction and enthusiasm. This part of the speech was met with approval and confidence from members of the House of Commons.

Two days have been allotted to discuss Churchill’s speech. The debate will continue tomorrow.

22 / II-1944 Gusev

[FPARF, f. 059, inv. 12, fold. 39, file 248, pp. 168–171]

Keywords: Second front, Poland, Yugoslavia

1. As if repeating the arguments he used in Tehran, Churchill said: “This wearing battle in Italy occupies troops who could not be occupied in other greater operations and it is an effective prelude to them”, (Hansard. Parliamentary Debates. 5th Series. Vol. 397. Col. 687). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hore-Belisha, Leslie (1893 – 1957) – British statesman and politician, Secretary of State for War (1937 – 1940), National Independent MP during the Second World War. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “In Marshal Tito, the Partisans have found an outstanding leader, glorious in the fight for freedom. … At the present time, the followers of Marshal Tito outnumber manifold those of General MihailovitchMihailovich … Of course, the Partisans of Marshall Tito are the only people who are doing any effective fighting against the Germans now”, (Hansard. Parliamentary Debates. 5th Series. Vol. 397. Col. 694). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)