Record of the meeting at the Kremlin, Moscow, between the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, I.V. Stalin and British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, 9 October 1944[[1]](#footnote-1)

The PRIME MINISTER gave Marshal Stalin a signed photograph of himself in return for the one sent to him some weeks ago by the Marshal[[2]](#footnote-2).

The PRIME MINISTER hoped they might clear away many questions about which they had been writing to each other for a long time. As time had passed many things had arisen, but they were unimportant compared with the common struggle. By talking to each other he and Stalin could avoid innumerable telegrams and letters.

MARSHAL STALIN replied that he was ready to discuss anything.

THE PRIME MINISTER suggested beginning with the most tiresome question – Poland. He said that they should have a common policy in regard to Poland. At present each had a game cock in his hand.

MARSHAL STALIN said (with a laugh) that it was difficult to do without cocks. They gave the morning signal.

THE PRIME MINISTER remarked that the question was settled as agreed. He would like presently to check up on the frontier with a map.

MARSHAL STALIN remarked that if the frontier was agreed on the Curzon Line it would help their discussion.[[3]](#footnote-3)

THE PRIME MINISTER said he wanted to explain what was in his and the Secretary of State’s mind as they understood the situation. The time would come when they would meet at the armistice table, which might also be the place where the peace was settled. The Americans would find it easier to settle at an armistice table, because there the President could decide, whereas at a peace table the Senate would have to be consulted. At the armistice table the Prime Minister would support the frontier line as fixed at Tehran and he thought it likely that the United States would do the same. That decision had been endorsed by the British War Cabinet and he felt it would be approved by his country. He would say it was right, fair and necessary for the safety and future of Russia. If some General Sosnkowski objected it would not matter, because Britain and United States thought it right and fair. He and Mr. Eden had for months been trying to get Sosnkowski sacked. He had now been sacked and as for General Bor[[4]](#footnote-4), the Germans were looking after him.

MARHSAL STALIN remarked that the Poles were now without a Commander-in-Chief.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that some colourless man had been left. He could not remember his name. The Prime Minister went on to ask whether Marshal Stalin thought it worth while to bring Mikolajczyk and Romer to Moscow. It would take only 36 hours to Moscow[[5]](#footnote-5).

MARSHAL STALIN asked whether they had authority to settle questions with the Polish Committee for National Liberation.

THE PRIME MINISTER was not sure. If, however, they were in Moscow they might, with British and Russian agreement, be persuaded to settle.

MARSHAL STALIN had no objection to making another attempt, but Mikolajczyk would have to make contact with the Committee. The latter now had an army at its disposal and represented a force.

THE PRIME MINISTER pointed out that the other side also thought they had an army, part of which had held out in Warsaw. They also had a brave army corps in Italy, where they had lost seven or eight thousand men. Then there was the armoured division, one brigade of which was in France. A Polish division which had gone to Switzerland when France fell was coming out in driblets. They were well equipped and they had many friends in England. They were good and brave men. The difficulty about the Poles was that they had unwise political leaders. Where there were two Poles there was one quarrel.[[6]](#footnote-6)

MARSHAL STALIN added that where there was one Pole he would begin to quarrel with himself through sheer boredom.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that Marshal Stalin and he himself as well as M. Molotov and Mr. Eden between them had more chance of bringing the Poles together. The British would bring pressure to bear on their Poles, while the Poles in the East were already in agreement with the Soviet Government.

MARSHAL STALIN agreed to try.

THE PRIME MINISTER asked if there was any objection to M. Grabski[[7]](#footnote-7)’s coming to Moscow.

MARHSAL STALIN had no objection[[8]](#footnote-8).

THE PRIME MINISTER then referred to the armistice terms for the satellites who had been coerced by Germany and had not distinguished themselves in the war[[9]](#footnote-9). If Marshal Stalin agreed, the Prime Minister thought that M. Molotov or Mr. Eden might discuss these terms. The terms for Hungary were important. He hoped the Russians would soon be in Budapest.

MARHSAL STALIN said it was possible[[10]](#footnote-10).

THE PRIME MINISTER pointed out that there were two countries in which the British had particular interest. One was Greece. He was not worrying much about Romania. That was very much a Russian affair and the terms which the Soviet Government had proposed were reasonable and showed much statecraft in the interests of general peace in the future.[[11]](#footnote-11) But in Greece it was different. Britain must be the leading Mediterranean Power and he hoped Marshal Stalin would let him have the first say about Greece in the same way as Marshal Stalin did about Romania. Of course, the British Government would keep in touch with the Soviet Government.

MARSHAL STALIN understood that Britain had suffered very much owing to her communications in the Mediterranean having been cut by the Germans. It was a serious matter for Britain when the Mediterranean route was not in her hands. In that respect Greece was very important. He agreed with the Prime Minister that Britain should have the first say in Greece.

THE PRIME MINISTER said it was better to express these things in diplomatic terms and not to use the phrase “dividing into spheres”, because the Americans might be shocked. But as long as he and Marshal understood each other he could explain matters to the President.[[12]](#footnote-12)

MARSHAL STALIN interrupted to say that he had received a message from President Roosevelt. The President wanted Mr. Harriman to attend their talks as an observer and desired that the decisions reached between them should be of a preliminary nature[[13]](#footnote-13).

THE PRIME MINISTER agreed. He had told the President – he and the President had no secrets – that he would welcome Mr. Harriman to a good number of their talks, but he did not want this to prevent intimate talk between Marshal Stalin and himself. He would keep the President informed. Mr. Harriman might come in for any formal talks as an observer. Mr. Harriman was not quite in the same position as they were.

MARSHAL STALIN said he had only sent a reply to the effect that he did not know what questions would be discussed, but as soon as he did know he would tell the President. He had noticed some signs of alarm in the President’s message about their talks and on the whole did not like the message. It seemed to demand too many rights for the United States leaving too little for the Soviet Union and Great Britain, who, after all, had a treaty of common assistance[[14]](#footnote-14). He had, however, no objection to Mr. Harriman’s attending the formal talks.

THE PRIME MINISTER referred to the Conference at Dumbarton Oaks[[15]](#footnote-15). The President had not wanted this to be discussed in Moscow but only when the three heads got together. The President had not said so, but he must have had in mind the coming election. The President would be more free to talk in about a month’s time. It was fair to say that while at first His Majesty’s Government had inclined to the American view they now saw a great deal of force in the other point of view. Supposing China asked Britain to give up Hong Kong, China and Britain would have to leave the room while Russia and the United States settled the question. Or, if the Argentine and the United States had a quarrel they would object if England, China and Russia had to settle it. The Prime Minister pointed out that all this was “off the record”. The wise thing was not to refer in Moscow to this question, but to wait until the meeting of the three heads, when it could be settled[[16]](#footnote-16). He then raised the question of the interests of the two Governments in the various Balkan countries and the need to work in harmony in each other them[[17]](#footnote-17).

After some discussion, it was agreed that as regards Hungary and Yugoslavia each of the two Governments was equally interested; that Russia had a major interest in Romania; and that Great Britain was in the same position with regard to Greece.

THE PRIME MINISTER suggested that where Bulgaria was concerned the British interest was greater than it was in Romania. This led to some discussion about the crimes committed by Bulgaria.

MARSHAL STALIN recalled the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, where the Bulgarians had been on the German side and three divisions had fought against the Russians in the last war.

THE PRIME MINISTER declared that Bulgaria owed more to Russia than to any other country. He said that in Romania Britain had been a spectator. In Bulgaria she had to be a little more than a spectator[[18]](#footnote-18).

M. MOLOTOV asked whether the Turkish question related to this matter.

THE PRIME MINISTER replied that he had not touched upon Turkey. He was only saying what was on his mind. He was glad to see how near it was to the Russian mind.

M. MOLOTOV remarked that the Convention of Montreux[[19]](#footnote-19) still remained.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that was a Turkish question and not a Bulgarian.

MARSHAL STALIN replied that Turkey was also a Balkan country. Under the Convention of Montreux, Japan had equal rights with Russia. Everything had been adjusted to the League of Nations and the League of Nations no longer existed. If Turkey were threatened she could close the Straits and Turkey herself had to decide when she was faced with a real threat. All the paragraphs in the Montreux Convention were controlled by Turkey. This was an anachronism. Marshal Stalin had put this question in Tehran and the Prime Minister had expressed his sympathy[[20]](#footnote-20). Now that they were discussing the Balkan question and Turkey was a Balkan country, did the Prime Minister think it appropriate to discuss it?

THE PRIME MINISTER agreed.

MARSHAL STALIN pointed out that if Britain were interested in the Mediterranean then Russia was equally interested in the Black Sea.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that Turkey had missed her chance after the Tehran conference. The reason she was frightened was because she had no modern weapons, she thought she had a good army, whereas nowadays an army was not everything. Turkey was not clever.

MARSHAL STALIN remarked that Turkey had 26 divisions in Thrace and asked against whom they were directed.

THE PRIME MINISTER replied they were directed against Bulgaria, because Bulgaria was armed with French weapons taken by the Germans. The Prime Minister went on to say that, taking a long view of the future of the world, it was no part of British policy to grudge Soviet Russia access to warm-water ports and to the great oceans and seas of the world. […][[21]](#footnote-21).

M. MOLOTOV asked what was the Prime Minister’s opinion of the Morgenthau plan[[22]](#footnote-22).

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the President and Mr. Morgenthau were not very happy about its reception. The Prime Minister went on to say that as he had declared in Tehran, Great Britain would not agree to mass execution of Germans, because one day British public opinion would cry out. But it was necessary to kill as many as possible in the field. The others should be made to work to repair the damage done to other countries. They might use the Gestapo on such work and the Hitler Youth should be re-educated to learn that it was more difficult to build than to destroy[[23]](#footnote-23).

MARSHAL STALIN thought that a long occupation of Germany would be necessary.

THE PRIME MINISTER did not think that the Americans would stay very long.

MARSHAL STALIN said France should provide some forces.

THE PRIME MINISTER agreed.

MARSHAL STALIN suggested the use of the small countries.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought United Poland could be employed.

MARSHAL STALIN said Silesia would go to the Poles and part of East Prussia. The Soviet Union would take Konigsberg and the Poles would be very interested in the occupation of Germany.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought the population might be moved from Silesia and East Prussia to Germany. If seven million[[24]](#footnote-24) had been killed in the war there would be plenty of room for them. He suggested that M. Molotov and Mr. Eden, with Mr. Harriman, should talk this over and get a picture of the general proposals for Marshal Stalin and himself to think about, and thus when the end came they would not be without something un-probed. They should also decide what role should the European Advisory Commission play[[25]](#footnote-25).

MARSHAL STALIN agreed.

THE PRIME MINSITER turned to the Anglo-American war against Japan. He pointed out that here again the utmost secrecy was required. Secrecy had been well maintained considering the declaration made by Marshal Stalin at Tehran about Japan. The Prime Minister had asked the President to give a statement for use as an outline of the American plan for 1945 in the Pacific. Plans were moving quickly and the position was changing very much as island after island was taken, but the President had given Mr. Harriman and General Deane[[26]](#footnote-26) an outline of the plan which he (the Prime Minister) was to be shown and it was to be discussed with the Soviet Generals. He suggested that conversations should begin with Mr. Harriman and his General and that afterwards they might go away and talk separately, technically.

MARSHAL STALIN said that the Soviet military leaders had been informed of the existence of the President’s plan and General Deane was to have had a talk with the Soviet High Command, but the latter were awaiting information from the Far East about Japanese strength. Marshal Stalin did not know details of the plan just as the Prime Minister did not know them, but he was prepared to acquaint himself with it. If they could all meet and examine the plan that would be better[[27]](#footnote-27).

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he thought that Mr. Harriman and General Deane had been authorized to tell Marshal Stalin in broad outline about the plan, but he thought it should be discussed with Field-Marshal Brooke[[28]](#footnote-28), who was ready to give an account of the operations in the West, in France and Italy and to tell how the affairs stood. He would like Marshal Stalin to know that the British had as many divisions fighting against Germany in Italy and France as the United States, and nearly as many as the United States fighting against Japan: altogether 60 divisions of 40,000 men each, including a heavy backing of commissariat, artillery, &c.[[29]](#footnote-29)

[TNA, PREM 3/434/4]

Key words: Poland, Turkey, inter-allied relations, the Balkans, Greece, post-war Germany.

1. Present at the meeting: Eden, Kerr, translator A. Birse – on the British side; Molotov and Pavlov – on the Soviet side. The Soviet record of the interview published in: Rzheshevskiy O.А. Stalin i Cherchill’. p. 418–428. Discrepancies between the British and the Soviet versions are specified in the notes. For Churchill's version of the conversation, see: Churchill W.S. The Second World War. Vol. VI. Boston, 1985. p. 197-198. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stalin's photo portraits with his handwritten inscription - "in memory of the day of the Allied invasion of American and British liberation forces in northern France", signed "friend - Joseph Stalin" - were sent as gifts to Roosevelt and Churchill through the Allies’ embassies in Moscow immediately after Stalin's meeting with Harriman and Kerr on 10 June (Pechatnov V.O., Magadeyev I.E. Perepiska. T. 2. p. 192). In a letter dated 2 July, Churchill responded warmly to the present: "I have received your great photograph with the inscription, which brings me great pleasure. I am very grateful to you". [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Omitted exchange of remarks, inserted in the Soviet version: "Churchill replied that these were the exact views of the British government. Comrade Stalin remarked that the Poles, however, don’t understand it as it as such". [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Komorowski, Tadeusz (according to one of his wartime codename “Bór”, also known as Bór-Komorowski) (1895 – 1966) – Polish Brigadier-General, Deputy Commander (1941 – 1943), Commander of Polish Armia Krajowa (Home Army) (1943 – 1944), Commander-in-Chief of the Armed forces of the Polish Government-in-Exile (1944). In October 1944 surrendered to Germans. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Churchill’s omitted remark: "They are confined to a plane in Cairo". [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the Soviet refcord, Stalin’s speech is presented in a more extended form, while Churchill’s is more condensed. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Grabski, Stanisław (1871 – 1949) – Polish statesman and politician, President of National Council of Poland in exile (1942 – 1944), Vice-President of State National Council (1945 – 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. By all appearances, Moscow considered Grabski as a representative of the Polish émigré circles with whom it would be possible to attempt a compromise. This was evident from the attempts to strike up negotiations in May 1944, during which Lebedev held meetings specifically with Mikołajczyk and Grabski. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Churchill’s omitted phrase: "The English are not fond of some of these satellites, just as the Russians [are not] of others". [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In October 1944, it seemed as though Budapest would very soon be taken by the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, (the order to attack the city was given on 28 October). However, the operation was seriously delayed and Budapest would not be liberated until 13 February 1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The truce with Romania (12 September 1944), as well as the statement made earlier by the Soviet government on the occasion of the Soviet forces entry into Romanian territory (2 April 1944), was positively received by the Western allies, as a sign of Moscow's lack of intentions to Sovietize Romania. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The last sentence in the Soviet minutes is omitted. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Roosevelt wrote about his expectations in his letter of 4 October [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Soviet minutes also note: "Such a mutual assistance treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union does not exist". [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Conference held at Dumbarton Oaks mansion in Washington, DC (21 August – 7 October 1944), which laid the foundation of the United Nations Organization. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In the Soviet minutes this phrase is followed by: "He, Churchill, thinks that Marshal Stalin verify, when necessary, that this issue was not discussed in Moscow. Comrade Stalin, smiling, says that, of course, he will not do this". [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Soviet record is much more detailed and colourful: "Churchill declared that he had prepared a rather dirty and rough paper, which shows the distribution of Soviet Union and Great Britain’s influence in Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. A chart was compiled for them in order to see what are the British’s thoughts on this issue. The Americans will be amazed by this document. But Marshal Stalin – as a realist, just as Churchill, is not distinguished by sentimentality, whereas Eden - a very flawed man. He, Churchill, did not show this document to the British Cabinet, but the British Cabinet generally agrees with what Churchill and Eden are offering. With regard to Parliament, the parliamentary majority in the Cabinet, but if they show this document to Parliament, the Parliament will still be unable to grasp it". [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Discussion on Bulgaria in the Soviet minutes differs somewhat. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The Montreux convention, signed in 1936, returned control of the Bosphorus Straits and Dardanelles to Turkey. The straits had previously been demilitarised and control given to an international commission under the Straits Convention of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Steiner*, Lights that Failed,* 120-123. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See: “Tehran Conference…”, pp. 141, 147, 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The discussion on the situation in the Balkans is omitted. Churchill insisted on the need not to impose regimes on Balkan countries, and Stalin agreed). As for Northern Italy, Churchill spoke about the need to prevent a civil war, hinting at activities of the Italian Communists and Stalin sought to demonstrate the limitations of Soviet influence on the Italian situation. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The plan initially prepared by the US Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau for the treatment of post-war Germany. Germany would be stripped of Silesia and East Prussia, Saar, and the area north of the Kiel Canal. The Ruhr and the Kiel Canal would be placed in an international zone and not allowed to trade with Germany proper. The remaining state would be divided in two. The proposal, with some modification, was presented at the Second Quebec Conference. Churchill was initially opposed to the proposal, but ultimately put his signature to it (Feis, 366-373). See also Warren Kimball, *Swords or ploughshares ?: the Morgenthau plan for defeated Nazi Germany, 1943-1946*. Philadelphia, 1976. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. In the Soviet minutes, Churchill’s response is more elaborate. It notes Churchill’s emphasis on his readiness to treat Germany harshly after the war. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In the Soviet minutes it is 8 million. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The Soviet minutes omit the last two sentences. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Deane, John Russell (1896 – 1982) – US Major-General, Head of the American Military Mission in Moscow (1943 – 1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Discussions on the situation in the Far East were held on 15 October, with military representatives of the USSR, the USA and the UK partaking (published in: Rzheshevskiy O.А. Stalin i Cherchill’. p. 466–468). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Brooke, Alan Francis (1883 – 1963) – British Field Marshal, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (1941 – 1946). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The Soviet minutes omit the last phrase. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)