Draft of a circular telegram from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR to Soviet ambassadors and envoys on the outcomes of the Crimean (Yalta) Conference, 15 February 1945

PEOPLE’S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

Comrade V.M. MOLOTOV[[1]](#footnote-1)

Dear Vyacheslav Mikhailovich,

I am sending you the draft of an informative telegram for our ambassadors and envoys abroad regarding the Crimean Conference.[[2]](#footnote-2)

I. Maisky

Top Secret

February 1945

The Crimean Conference, in addition to publishing the communiqué, adopted a number of decisions which are not subject to publication. For your bearing, I inform you of the most important of these decisions:

1) In regards to Germany, it was acknowledged in principle that it is necessary to partition Germany. In order to work out the plan for the partition, a special commission was set up in London, consisting of Eden (as Chairman) and the Soviet (Comrade Gusev) and US (Winant) ambassadors.

2) On the question of reparations, Churchill, Roosevelt and comrade Stalin signed a protocol. The substance of the protocol is as follows: a) Germany is obliged to pay in kind for the losses it caused to the Allied nations; b) Reparations first and foremost will go to those countries that bore the brunt of the war, suffered the heaviest losses and have organized victory over the enemy; c) Reparations are to be levied in three forms: First, a one-time withdrawal from Germany’s national wealth over the course of two years after the war (equipment, factories, ships, rolling stock, German investments abroad, shares of companies that remain in Germany, etc.), these withdrawals are made primarily from the perspective of eliminating of Germany’s military potential[[3]](#footnote-3); Second, annual commodity deliveries after the war for a number of years, the number of which is still to be established; and, thirdly, German labour; d) In order to outline a detailed plan for reparations on the above foundations, an Allied Reparations Commission consisting of representatives of the USSR, the USA and England is being established in Moscow. All of the above was adopted unanimously by the three delegations. However, in determining the total sums of reparations with the first two forms - i.e. from one-time withdrawals and annual commodity deliveries - it was not possible to reach a consensus. The Soviet proposal was intended for estimating this amount to be 20 billion dollars, of which 10 billion was allocated to the USSR, 8 billion to the United States and the United Kingdom and 2 billion to the remaining countries.[[4]](#footnote-4) The US delegation has agreed to accept the Soviet plan as a basis for discussion at the Moscow Reparation Commission. The British delegation considered it impossible to give any specific number for reparations ahead of the review of the whole question at the Moscow Reparation Commission. The protocol defines the above-mentioned Soviet-American agreement, as well the different view of the English. The Protocol further states that the Soviet-American proposal will be submitted to the Moscow Reparation Commission as one of the proposals to be discussed by it.

3) On the question of voting, the Security Council made the following decision: "a) Each member of the Security Council shall have one vote; b) Decisions taken by the Security Council on procedural matters shall be taken by a majority vote of seven members; c) A Security Council decision on all other matters shall be taken by a majority vote of seven members, including the concurring votes of the permanent members. What is more, the party involved in a dispute shall refrain from voting when decisions are taken in accordance with Section A of Chapter 8 and in accordance with the second sentence of the first paragraph of section C of Chapter 8." Specifically, this means that the issues related to military or economic sanctions require unanimity from the permanent members. On issues concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes, such unanimity is not required, and a permanent member who gets involved in the dispute will not participate in the voting. Furthermore, according to our proposal, the United States and Great Britain have pledged that at the San Francisco conference they will support the granting of rights to Ukraine and Belorussia to participate as founding members at the International Organization for Security.

4) At the conference the Americans brought up the issue of the so-called ‘territorial trusteeship’ over the less developed nations. Churchill strongly protested against this, suspecting that the Americans’ presence brings with it anti-British Empire intentions[[5]](#footnote-5). After assurances from the Americans that it is not about territories belonging to the Allies[[6]](#footnote-6), a resolution was adopted, according to which the future five permanent Security Council members will consult each other on ‘territorial trusteeship’ ahead of the San Francisco conference. However, identifying the specific countries that are to be subject to such a trusteeship will be confirmed by a later agreement. The resolution also states that "the territorial trusteeship" can be entered into three cases: a) by League of Nations mandates, b) for the territories detached from enemy states, and c) for countries that can be voluntarily placed under trusteeship.

5) The Polish question took up a lot of time at the conference and has been discussed repeatedly at meetings both during the conference and the three Foreign Ministers (the last meetings took place on a daily basis in parallel with the general meetings of the conference and were basically used to prepare a draft resolution). Eventually, a declaration was adopted and published in the communiqué. The declaration was based on our suggestions.

6) At the conference, Comrade. Stalin made a statement that the Montreux Convention is outdated and needs revision in the sense of providing greater rights and opportunities to the USSR. The British and the Americans are not in principle opposed to the revision of the convention, and the next meeting of the three Foreign Ministers in London is tasked with examining the proposals regarding the issue, and which are to be put forward by the USSR.

7) The British and the Americans tried to raise the issue of Iran at the conference (specifically, on the withdrawal of the allied forces from Iran and about the exploitation of Iran’s oil resources), but we declined to discuss the matter.

8) The general atmosphere at the conference was of friendly nature, and felt the desire to reach an agreement on contentious issues. We appreciate the conference as a very positive factor, especially for Polish and Yugoslav affairs, as well as for reparations.

[FPARF, f. 017, inv. 3, fold. 2, file 1, pp. 52-56]

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Keywords: inter-allied relations, Poland, post-war Germany, United Nations

1. A copy of the draft was also sent to Vyshinsky. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This draft formed the basis of the telegram sent on 16 February. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Already by summer 1944, the examination from a purely military-strategic perspective of the issue of reparations (and, first and foremost, of their simultaneous seizure) typified the approach formulated by the Commission of the Peoples’ Commissariat of Foreign Affairs for the Compensation of Damage Inflicted on the Soviet Union by Hitler’s Germany and Its Allies (under Maisky’s leadership). A note, ‘The Basic Policies for the Reparation Programme of the USSR’ (dated 28 July) and distributed to the leadership of the Politburo and People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, emphasized that ‘designated seizures have the aim, on one hand, of aiding the recovery of the USSR within the shortest possible timescale, and, on the other, of reducing the potential of Germany to the absolute minimum’ (SSSR i germanskii vopros. Т. 1. S. 511). The priority of the security perspective was also acknowledged (unlike after the First World War) by the British side: ‘in the opinion of His Majesty’s Government, security is more important than reparation; and it is essential that, until agreement has been reached on a policy for stripping Germany of her war potential, decisions taken on reparation should not prejudice that policy’. This was stated in a draft directive to the British delegation to the conference of the Reparation Commission in Moscow in June 1945 (Draft Directive for the United Kingdom Representative on the Moscow Conference on Reparations (in: C.P. (45) 16, 05/06/1945) // TNA, CAB 66/66.). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Earlier, in the context of a discussion within the Soviet leadership, it was Maisky who strongly insisted that the Soviet delegation should not yield over the 10 billion dollars ‘as our minimum demand’ (note dated 20 December 1944). Maisky even entered into a written exchange on this issue with Stalin, who had earlier given an instruction to proceed from a figure of 5 billion dollars. See: SSSR i germanskii vopros. Т. 1. S. 589–592. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Similar apprehensions found subsequent reflection on several occasions in the internal memoranda of the British Colonial Office. See, for example: W.P. (45) 300, Memo by Stanley, 14/05/145 // TNA, CAB 66/65. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the future, Stalin would also give analogous assurances to the representatives of France and other colonial powers who had seen a potential threat in American plans for international trusteeship. See the telegram of the French Ambassador General G. Catroux (dated 20 March) on the outcomes of his conversations with Stalin on 19 March in: Archives Nationales de France (henceforth – AN), Papiers Bidault 457 AP 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)