Extract from the telegram of the Soviet Ambassador in the UK, F.T. Gusev, to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, 18 May 1945

During his speech, Churchill spoke of Trieste and Poland with great irritation and undisguised malice. From his behaviour, it was clear that he had difficulty restraining himself. His speech contained a lot of blackmail and threats, and not just blackmail. After Churchill’s speech on the radio on 13 May[[1]](#footnote-1), the British press has adopted a new anti-Soviet stance in the light of European events, trying to explain all the difficulties that have arisen as a result of the USSR’s position. Churchill's speech was a directive to the press. In parliamentary circles Polish agents wage an unbridled anti-Soviet campaign and call for new debates on the Polish question. Eden has already declared in the House of Commons, that after the holidays a debate on the international situation will be taking place. It can be expected that this debate will be turned into a large anti-Soviet demonstration to put pressure on the Soviet Union with the use of threats. We still do not have precise information about the purpose of Eisenhower and Montgomery's arrival in London, but there are reasons to believe that they were called on to discuss and evaluate the parity of military forces of the Allies and the Soviet Union.

Taking into account the situation created, we need to bear in mind that we are dealing with an adventurer, for whom war is his natural element, who feels much better in wartime than in peacetime [[2]](#footnote-2).

18 / V.45 Gusev

[FPARF, f. 059a, inv. 7, fold. 13, file 6, pp. 349-356]

[Publ. (with editing) in: Sovetskoye-angliyskiye otnosheniya vo vremya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny 1941 – 1945. T. 2. M., 1983. S. 385–389]

Keywords: inter-allied relations, Poland

1. In a 40-minute speech, Churchill gave an overview of past events since 1939, accentuating the role and valour of Great Britain and the Commonwealth during the war. The following part of the speech was clearly directed at the USSR: ‘On the continent of Europe we have yet to make sure that the simple and honourable purposes for which we entered the war are not brushed aside or overlooked in the months following our success, and that the words ‘freedom,’ democracy,’ and ‘liberation’ are not distorted from their true meaning as we have understood them. There would be little use in punishing the Hitlerites for their crimes if law and justice did not rule [in Europe], and if totalitarian or police Governments were to take the place of the German invaders’ (cited by: Winkler H.A. The Age of Catastrophe: A History of the West, 1914 – 1945. New Haven; London, 2015. P. 847). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The British account of the conversation was compiled by Kerr, see: TNA, PREM 3/396/12. He confirmed the extremely sharp tone of the Prime Minister’s statements, although the diplomat declined to commit the most powerful phrases to paper. In the margins of the account, Eden suggested that he would have left it as it was and that he did not consider such language would cause any harm provided it was properly set out; he hoped it would prove useful, although he acknowledged that that depended on Gusev. The minister, clearly pleased with this conversation, advised the Prime Minister to distribute a record of it to the King and Cabinet. Apparently, it did circulate in some fashion, in as much as D. Reynolds has noted that ‘a few days later, Churchill recalled all copies of the record of this 18 May meeting’ (Reynolds D. In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War. N.Y., 2005. P. 480). Gusev, having heard Churchill out ‘with a strained expression on his large face’ (according to Kerr), tried to clear the air several days later in a conversation with Eden, declaring that fears for Anglo-Soviet relations were groundless and expressing his surprise at the Prime Minister’s tone (Dilks D. Churchill and Company: Allies and Rivals in War and Peace. London, 2012. P. 213). However, the telegram produced above shows that Gusev’s real assessment was much harsher. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)