

Personal Message from Stalin to Mr Churchill

Allow me to thank you for your two personal messages.

Your messages have initiated agreement between our two Governments. Now, as you with every justification put it, the Soviet Union and Great Britain have become fighting Allies in the struggle against Hitler Germany. I have no doubt that our two countries are strong enough to defeat our common enemy in the face of all difficulties.

It may not be out of place to inform you that the position of the Soviet troops at the front remains strained. The results of Hitler's unexpected violation of the Non-Aggression Pact and the sudden attack on the Soviet Union, which have placed the German troops at an advantage, are still affecting the position of the Soviet armies. It is quite obvious that the German forces would have been far more advantageously placed if the Soviet troops had had to counter the blow, not along the line Kishinev-Lvov-Brest-Bialystok-Kaunas and Vyborg, but along the line Odessa-Kamenets Podolsk-Minsk and the vicinity of Leningrad.

It seems to me, furthermore, that the military position of the Soviet Union, and by the same token that of Great Britain, would improve substantially if a front were established against Hitler in the West (Northern France) and the North (the Arctic).

A front in the North of France, besides diverting Hitler's forces from the East, would make impossible invasion of Britain by Hitler. Establishment of this front would be popular both with the British Army and with the population of Southern England. I am aware of the difficulty of establishing such a front, but it seems to me that, notwithstanding the difficulties, it should be done, not only for the sake of our common cause, but also in Britain's own interest. The best time to open this front is now, seeing that Hitler's forces have been switched to the East and that he has not yet been able to consolidate the positions he has taken in the East.

It would be easier still to open a front in the North. This would call for action only by British naval and air forces, without landing troops or artillery. Soviet land, naval and air forces could take part in the operation. We would be glad if Great Britain could send thither, say, one light division or more of Norwegian volunteers, who could be moved to Northern Norway for insurgent operations against the Germans.

July 18, 1941

Source: Stalin: Works, Vol. 17: 1941

Received on November 22, 1941

W. CHURCHILL TO J. V. STALIN*

Many thanks for your message just received. At the very beginning of the war I began a personal correspondence with President Roosevelt which has led to a very solid understanding being established between us and has often helped in getting things done quickly. My only desire is to work on equal terms of comradeship and confidence with you.

About Finland. I was quite ready to advise the Cabinet to contemplate, declaring war on Finland when I sent you my telegram of September 5th. Later information has made me think that it will be more helpful to Russia and the common cause if the Finns can be got to stop fighting and stand still or go home, than if we put them in the dock with the guilty Axis Powers by a formal declaration of war and make them fight it out to the end. However, if they do not stop in the next fortnight and you still wish us to declare war on them we will certainly do so. I agree with you that it was very wrong that any publication should have been made. We certainly were not responsible.

Should our offensive in Libya result, as we hope, in the destruction of the German and Italian armies there, it will be possible to take a broad survey of the war as a whole with more freedom than has hitherto been open to His Majesty's Government.

For this purpose we shall be willing in the near future to send Foreign Secretary Eden, whom you know, via the Mediterranean to meet you at Moscow or elsewhere. He would be accompanied by high military and other experts, and will be able to discuss every question relating to the war, including the sending of troops not only into the Caucasus but into the fighting line of your armies in the South. Neither our shipping resources nor our communications will allow large numbers to be employed, and even so you will have to choose between troops and supplies across Persia.

I notice that you wish also to discuss the post-war organisation of peace. Our intention is to fight the war, in alliance with you and in constant consultation with you* to the utmost of our strength and however long it lasts, and when the war is won, as I am sure it will be, we expect that Soviet Russia, Great Britain and the U.S.A. will meet at the council table of victory as the three principal partners and as the agencies by which Nazism will have been destroyed. Naturally the first object will be to prevent Germany, and particularly Prussia, from breaking out upon us for a third time. The fact that Russia is a Communist State and that Britain and the U.S.A. are not and do not intend to be is not any obstacle to our making a good plan for our mutual safety and rightful interests. The Foreign Secretary will be able, to discuss the whole of this field with you.

It may well be that your defence of Moscow and Leningrad, as well as the splendid resistance to the invader along the whole Russian front, will inflict mortal injuries upon the internal structure of the Nazi regime. But we must not count upon such good fortune but simply keep on striking at them to the utmost with might and main.

Source: Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and the Presidents of the U.S.A and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Volume One. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. Foreign Languages Publishing House. Moscow 1957.

MESSAGE FROM PREMIER STALIN TO PRIME MINISTER CHURCHILL

Thank you for your message.

I sincerely welcome the desire, expressed in your message, to cooperate with me through personal correspondence on a basis of collaboration and trust, and I hope it will contribute in many respects to the success of our common cause.

As to Finland, the U.S.S.R. does not suggest anything—at least for the time being—but cessation of military operations and her withdrawal from the war. If, however, Finland does not do this within the brief time stipulated by you, I consider a British declaration of the state of war with Finland advisable and necessary. Otherwise the impression might be created that we lack unity in the war against Hitler and his more zealous accomplices and that the accomplices in the Hitler aggression may continue to commit their infamous deeds with impunity. As regards Hungary and Roumania, I suppose we can wait.

I fully support your proposal for sending Mr Eden, your Foreign Secretary, to the U.S.S.R. in the near future. Discussion and approval of an agreement on joint operations by the Soviet and British troops on our front and the speedy execution of that task would be of great positive significance. It is quite true that the discussion and adoption of a plan for the post-war organisation of peace should be designed to keep Germany, above all Prussia, from again breaking the peace and plunging the nations into a new bloodbath.

I also agree, that difference of political system in the U.S.S.R., on the one hand, and of Great Britain and the U.S.A., on the other, should not and cannot be an obstacle to a favourable solution of the fundamental problems of safeguarding our mutual security and rightful interests. I hope that reticences or doubts on this score, if any, will be dispelled by the talks with Mr Eden. Please accept my congratulations on the successful beginning of the British offensive in Libya.

The Soviet troops are still engaged in tense struggle against the Hitler armies. However, despite the difficulties, the resistance of our troops is growing and will continue to do so. Our resolve to smash the enemy is unshakeable.

Source: Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and the Presidents of the U.S.A and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Volume One. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. Foreign Languages Publishing House. Moscow 1957.