

Agreed:-

To inform Stalin that we  
will launch OVERLORD by June 1st, and  
~~and will simultaneously make~~  
~~the biggest attack on Southern~~  
~~France that is permitted by~~  
~~the landing craft available~~  
~~at that time.~~

*The month of  
during July*

~~in conjunction~~  
~~together~~ with a supporting  
operation in Southern France  
of the largest scale that  
is permitted by the landing  
craft available at that  
time

~~TOP SECRET~~

June 5, 1947

By order of President Truman, Mr. J. F. Byrnes was this date permitted to read messages from President Roosevelt's private files exchanged between President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin bearing on an attempt to arrange a conference in Bern, Switzerland, between representatives of Field Marshal Alexander and representatives of the German High Command in Italy with the purpose of discussing a capitulation of the German Army in Italy.

There are seven of these messages dated: 24 March 1945, 29 March 1945, 31 March 1945, 3 April 1945, 4 April 1945, 7 April 1945, and 11 April 1945.

WDR

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 11  
By SP8/DAB/ltt/9Am/73  
NARS Date 3/7/95

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24 March 1945

FROM: THE PRESIDENT  
TO: MARSHAL STALIN

I have received from Ambassador Harriman a letter addressed to him by Mr. Molotov regarding an investigation being made by Field Marshal Alexander into a reported possibility of obtaining the surrender of part or all of the German Army in Italy, in which letter Mr. Molotov demands that this investigation to be undertaken in Switzerland be stopped forthwith because of the non participation therein of Soviet officers.

I am sure that the facts of this matter, through misunderstanding, have not been correctly presented to you.

The facts are as follows: Some few days ago unconfirmed information was received in Switzerland that some German officers were considering the possibility of arranging for the surrender of German troops that are opposed to the British-American Armies in Italy commanded by Field Marshal Alexander.

When this information reached Washington, Field Marshal Alexander was authorized to send an officer, or officers, of his staff to Switzerland to ascertain the accuracy of the report, and if it appeared to be of sufficient promise, to arrange with any competent German officers for a conference with Field Marshal Alexander at his headquarters in Italy to discuss details of the surrender. Soviet representatives would, of course, be present if such a meeting could be arranged.

**[REDACTED]**

The Soviet Government was immediately informed of this investigation to be made in Switzerland and was later informed that it will be agreeable for Soviet officers to be present at Field Marshal Alexander's meeting with German officers when and if such a meeting is finally arranged in Berne to discuss details of a surrender at Caserta.

Attempts by our representatives to arrange a meeting with German officers have met with no success up to the present time, but there still appears to be a possibility of such a meeting.

You will, of course, understand that my government must give every assistance to all officers in the field in command of American Forces who believe there is a possibility of forcing the surrender of enemy troops in their area. It would be completely unreasonable for me to take any other attitude or to permit any delay which must cause additional and avoidable loss of life in the American Forces. You as a military man will understand the necessity for prompt action to avoid losing an opportunity. It is in the same category as would be the sending of a flag of truce to your general at Koenigsberg or Danzig.

In such a surrender of enemy forces in the field, there can be no political implications whatever and no violation of our agreed principle of unconditional surrender.

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In any discussion of details of surrender by our commanders of American Forces in the field, I will be pleased to have the benefit of the experience and advice of any of your officers who can be present, but I cannot agree to suspend investigation of the possibility because of objection on the part of Mr. Molotov for some reason that is completely beyond my understanding.

I do not expect much from the reported possibility, but I hope you will, with the purpose of preventing misunderstanding between our officers, point out to the Soviet officials concerned the desirability and necessity of our taking prompt and effective action without any delay to accomplish the surrender of any enemy military forces in the field that are opposed to American Forces.

I am sure that when a similar opportunity comes on the Soviet front you will have the same attitude and will take the same action.

ROOSEVELT

COPY

TRANSLATION

FROM: J. V. STALIN  
TO: PRESIDENT F. D. ROOSEVELT

I gave consideration to the question you raised before me in the letter of March 25, 1945, and have found that the Soviet Government could not have given a different answer after the Soviet representatives were refused participation in the discussions in Bern with the Germans regarding the possibility of capitulation of German troops and opening the front to Anglo-American troops in Northern Italy.

I am not against and, more than this, I am fully for using the opportunity of disintegration in the German armies and to hasten their capitulation in any section of the front, to encourage them in the opening of the front for the Allies.

But I agree to negotiations with the enemy on such matter only in the case when these negotiations will not make the situation of the enemy easier, if there will be excluded a possibility for the Germans to manoeuvre and to use these negotiations for shifting of their troops to other sections of the front and, first of all, to the Soviet front.

Only with the purpose of creating such a guarantee was the participation of representatives of the Soviet Military



Command in such negotiations with the enemy considered necessary by the Soviet Government, no matter where they would take place -- in Bern or Caserta. I cannot understand why representatives of the Soviet Command were refused participation in these negotiations and in what way could they cause inconvenience to the representatives of the Allied Command.

For your information I have to tell you that the Germans have already made use of the negotiations with the Allied Command and during this period have succeeded in shifting three divisions from Northern Italy to the Soviet front.

The task of coordinated operations with a blow upon the Germans from the West, South and East, announced at the Crimea Conference is to bind the troops of the enemy to the place of their location and not to give the enemy any possibility to manoeuvre and shift troops in the necessary for him direction. This task is being carried out by the Soviet Command. This is being violated by Field Marshal Alexander.

This circumstance is irritating the Soviet Command and creates ground for distrust.

"As a military man," you write me, "you will understand, that it is necessary to act quickly in order not to miss an opportunity. It would be the same if your general at Koenigsberg or Danzig would be approached by the enemy with a white flag." It is regretted that an analogy does not

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suit this case. German troops at Koenigsberg and Danzig are surrounded. If they surrender they will do it in order to avoid annihilation but they cannot open a front to the Soviet troops as the front has moved away from them far to the West, to the Oder. An entirely different situation is that of the German troops in Northern Italy. They are not surrounded and they do not face annihilation. If the Germans in Northern Italy, in spite of this seek negotiations in order to surrender and to open the front to Allied troops, this means that they have different, more serious aims relating to the fate of Germany.

I have to tell you, that if on the Eastern front, somewhere on the Oder, similar conditions of a possibility of capitulation of the Germans and opening the front to Soviet troops would arise, I would not hesitate to inform immediately the Anglo-American Military Command to request it to send their representatives for participation in negotiations as in such cases the Allies should have no secrets from each other.

March 29, 1945

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TRANSLATION

Major-General John R. Dean  
Head of the United States Military Mission  
in the USSR.

Dear General Dean:

Please bring to the attention of General Marshall the following:

On February 20, 1945 I received General Marshall's communication, transmitted to me by General Dean, that the Germans are forming two groupings on the Eastern front for a counter-offensive: one in Pomerania for a blow in the direction of Torun and another in the region of Vienna, Moravska Ostrava for an offensive in the direction of Lodz. Besides, the southern grouping was supposed to include the 6th tank army "SS". I received similar information on February 12 from Colonel Brinkman, head of the army section of the British Military Mission. I am extremely grateful to General Marshall for the information called to assist our common aims, which he so kindly put at our disposal. At the same time I consider it my duty to inform General Marshall that the military actions on the Eastern front in the course of March have not confirmed the information submitted by him as these battles showed that the main grouping of German troops, including the 6th tank army "SS", was concentrated not in Pomerania and not in the region of Moravska Ostrava, but in the region of Lake Balaton, from where the Germans attacked with the

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purpose to reach the Danube and to force it south of Budapest.

This fact shows that the information used by General Marshall did not correspond to the actual course of events on the Eastern front in March.

A possibility is not excluded that some of the sources of this information aimed to disorientate the Anglo-American Command as well as the Soviet Command and to divert the attention of the Soviet Command from the region where the principal offensive operation of the Germans was being prepared on the Eastern front.

In spite of the above-said I ask General Marshall, if possible, to continue to inform us regarding available data about the enemy. I consider it my duty to inform General Marshall regarding the above with the only purpose that he could make certain conclusions regarding the source of this information.

I beg you to transmit to General Marshall my respect and gratitude.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Antonov, Army General  
Chief of General Staff  
of the Red Army

March 30, 1945

COPY

  
31 March 1945

FROM: THE PRESIDENT

TO: MARSHAL STALIN

It seems to me in the exchange of messages we have had on possible future negotiations with the Germans for surrender of their forces in Italy, that although both of us are in agreement on all the basic principles, the matter now stands in an atmosphere of regrettable apprehension and mistrust.

No negotiations for surrender have been entered into, and if there should be any negotiations they will be conducted at Caserta with your representatives present throughout. Although the attempt at Bern to arrange for the conduct of these negotiations has so far been fruitless, Marshal Alexander has been directed to keep you informed of his progress in this matter.

I must repeat that the meeting in Bern was for the single purpose of arranging contact with competent German military officers and not for negotiations of any kind.

There is no question of negotiating with the Germans in any way which would permit them to transfer elsewhere forces from the Italian front. Negotiations, if any are conducted, will be on the basis of unconditional surrender. With regard to the lack of Allied offensive operations in Italy, this condition has in no way resulted from any expectation of an agreement with the Germans. As a matter of fact, recent interruption of offensive operations in Italy has been due

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primarily to the recent transfer of Allied forces, British and Canadian divisions, from that front to France. Preparations are now made for an offensive on the Italian front about April 10th, but while we hope for success, the operation will be of limited power due to the lack of forces now available to Alexander. He has seventeen dependable divisions and is opposed by twenty-four German divisions. We intend to do everything within the capacity of our available resources to prevent any withdrawal of the German forces now in Italy.

I feel that your information about the time of the movements of German troops from Italy is in error. Our best information is that three German divisions have left Italy since the first of the year, two of which have gone to the Eastern front. The last division of the three started moving about February 25, more than two weeks before anybody heard of any possibility of a surrender. It is therefore clearly evident that the approach made by German agents in Bern occurring after the last movement of troops began could not possibly have had any effect on the movement.

The entire episode has arisen through the initiative of a German officer reputed to be close to Himmler and there, of course, is a strong possibility that his sole purpose is to create suspicion and distrust between the Allies. There is no reason why we should permit him to succeed in that aim. I trust that the above categorical statement of the present situation and of my intentions will allay the apprehensions which you express in your message of March 29.

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ROOSEVELT

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[REDACTED] TRANSLATION

PERSONAL, [REDACTED]  
FROM  
MARSHAL J. V. STALIN  
TO  
PRESIDENT F. D. ROOSEVELT

I have received your message on the question of negotiations in Bern. You are absolutely right that in connection with the affair regarding negotiation of the Anglo-American Command with the German Command somewhere in Bern or some other place "has developed an atmosphere of fear and distrust deserving regrets."

You insist that there have been no negotiations yet.

It may be assumed that you have not been fully informed. As regards my military colleagues, they, on the basis of data which they have on hand, do not have any doubts, that the negotiations have taken place and that they have ended in an agreement with the Germans, on the basis of which the German commander on the Western front - Marshal Kesselring, has agreed to open the front and permit the Anglo-American troops to advance to the East, and the Anglo-Americans have promised in return to ease for the Germans the peace terms.

I think that my colleagues are close to truth. Otherwise one could not have understood the fact that the Anglo-Americans have refused to admit to Bern representatives of the Soviet Command for participation in the negotiations with the Germans.

I also cannot understand the silence of the British who have allowed you to correspond with me on this unpleasant

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matter, and they themselves remain silent, although it is known that the initiative in this whole affair with the negotiations in Bern belongs to the British.

I understand that there are certain advantages for the Anglo-American troops as a result of these separate negotiations in Bern or in some other place since the Anglo-American troops get the possibility to advance into the heart of Germany almost without any resistance on the part of the Germans, but why was it necessary to conceal this from the Russians, and why your Allies -- the Russians, were not notified?

As a result of this at the present moment the Germans on the Western front in fact have ceased the war against England and the United States. At the same time the Germans continue the war with Russia, the Ally of England and the United States. It is understandable that such a situation can in no way serve the cause of preservation of the strengthening of trust between our countries.

I have already written to you in my previous message and consider it necessary to repeat it here that I personally and my colleagues would have never made such a risky step, being aware that a momentary advantage, no matter what it would be, is fading before the principle advantage on the preservation and strengthening of trust among the Allies.

April 3, 1945.

COPY

4 April 1945

FROM: THE PRESIDENT  
TO: MARSHAL STALIN

I have received with astonishment your message of April 3 containing an allegation that arrangements which were made between Field Marshals Alexander and Kesselring at Berne, "permitted the Anglo-American troops to advance to the East and the Anglo-Americans promised in return to ease for the Germans the peace terms."

In my previous messages to you in regard to the attempts made in Bern to arrange a conference to discuss a surrender of the German Army in Italy, I have told you that,

- (1) No negotiations were held in Bern;
- (2) That the meeting had no political implications whatever;

(3) That in any surrender of the enemy army in Italy there could be no violation of our agreed principle of unconditional surrender;

(4) That Soviet officers would be welcomed at any meeting that might be arranged to discuss surrender.

For the advantage of our common war effort against Germany, which today gives excellent promise of an early success in a disintegration of the German armies, I must continue to assume that you have the same high confidence in my truthfulness and reliability that I have always had in yours.

I have also a full appreciation of the effect your

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gallant army has had in making possible a crossing of the Rhine by the forces under General Eisenhower and the effect that your forces will have hereafter on the eventual collapse of the German resistance to our combined attacks.

I have complete confidence in General Eisenhower and know that he certainly would inform me before entering into any agreement with the Germans. He is instructed to demand and will demand unconditional surrender of enemy troops that may be defeated on his front. Our advances on the Western Front are due to military action. Their speed has been attributable mainly to the terrific impact of our air power resulting in destruction of German communications, and to the fact that Eisenhower was able to cripple the bulk of the German Forces on the Western front while they were still West of the Rhine.

I am certain that there were no negotiations in Bern at any time, and I feel that your information to that effect must have come from German sources which have made persistent efforts to create dissension between us in order to escape in some measure for responsibility for their war crimes. If that was Wolff's purpose in Bern your message proves that he has had some success.

With a confidence in your belief in my personal reliability and in my determination to bring about together with you an unconditional surrender of the Nazis, it is astonishing that a belief seems to have reached the Soviet Government that I have entered into an agreement with the enemy without first obtaining your full agreement.

[REDACTED]

Finally, I would say this, it would be one of the great tragedies of history if at the very moment of the victory, now within our grasp, such distrust, such lack of faith should prejudice the entire undertaking after the colossal losses of life, materiel and treasure involved.

Frankly I cannot avoid a feeling of bitter resentment toward your informers, whoever they are, for such vile misrepresentations of my actions or those of my trusted subordinates.

ROOSEVELT.

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[REDACTED]  
TRANSLATION

PERSONAL AND [REDACTED]  
FROM  
PREMIER J.V.STALIN  
TO  
PRESIDENT F. D. ROOSEVELT

I have received your message of April 5th.

1. In my message of April 3 I spoke not about honesty and dependability. I never doubted your honesty and dependability, as well as the honesty and dependability of Mr. Churchill. I speak about the fact that in the course of this correspondence between us has been revealed a difference of opinions as to what can an Ally allow himself to do in respect to the other Ally and what he should not allow himself to do. We, Russians, believe that in the present situation at the fronts when the enemy is confronted by the inevitability of capitulation, at any meeting with the Germans on questions of capitulation by representatives of one of the Allies arrangements have to be made for the participation in this meeting of representatives of the other Ally. At any rate this is absolutely necessary if this Ally is seeking participation in such a meeting. Americans, however, and the Englishmen think differently, considering the Russian point of view wrong. Proceeding from this fact they rejected the Russians the right of participation in the meeting with the Germans in Switzerland. I have already written to you and consider it not unnecessary to repeat that the Russians in a similar situation under no circumstances would have refused the Americans and Englishmen

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the right for participation in such a meeting. I continue to consider the Russian point of view as the only right one as it excludes any possibility of mutual distrust and does not permit the enemy to sow distrust among us.

2. It is difficult to agree that lack of resistance on the part of the Germans on the Western front can be explained only that they are defeated. The Germans have on the Eastern front 147 divisions. They could without harm to their cause take from the Eastern front 15-20 divisions and shift them to the aid of their troops on the Western front. However, the Germans did not do it and are not doing it. They continue to fight savagely with the Russians for some unknown junction Zemlianitsa in Czechoslovakia which they need as much as a dead man needs poultices, but surrender without any resistance such important towns in Central Germany as Osnabrück, Mannheim, Kassel. Don't you agree that such a behavior of the Germans is more than strange and incomprehensible.

3. As regards my informers, I may assure you that they are very honest and modest people who carry out their duties accurately and have no intentions of insulting anyone. These people have been manifold tested by us by their deeds. Judge for yourself. In February, 1945, General Marshall has given a number of important information to the General Staff of the Soviet troops, where he, on the basis of data he had on hand, warned the Russians that in March there will be two serious counter-attacks of the Germans on the Eastern front one of which

**[REDACTED]**

will be directed from Pomerania on Torun and the other from the region of Moravska Ostrava on Lodz. In fact, however, it proved that the principal blow of the Germans was being prepared and was realized not in the above-mentioned regions but in an entirely different region, namely in the region of Lake Balaton, to the South-west of Budapest. As it is known the Germans have concentrated in this region up to 35 divisions, including 11 tank divisions. This was one of the most serious blows in the course of the war with such great concentration of tank forces. Marshal Tolbukhin succeeded in avoiding a catastrophe and in complete defeat of the Germans later, because my informers have uncovered, true a little late, this plan of the main blow of the Germans and immediately informed Marshal Tolbukhin. Thus I had another occasion to convince myself in the accuracy and knowledge of Soviet informers.

For your orientation in this matter I am enclosing a letter of the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, Army General Antonov, addressed to Major-General Dean.

April 7, 1945

[REDACTED]

11 April 1945

FROM: THE PRESIDENT  
TO: MARSHAL STALIN

Thank you for your frank explanation of the Soviet point of view of the Bern incident which now appears to have faded into the past without having accomplished any useful purpose.

There must not, in any event, be mutual distrust and minor misunderstandings of this character should not arise in the future. I feel sure that when our armies make contact in Germany and join in a fully coordinated offensive the Nazi Armies will disintegrate.

ROOSEVELT

[REDACTED]

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