

## **February 2, 1944**

# **Memorandum of Conversation re Stalin Harriman Coverstation**

### **Citation:**

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### **Summary:**

A conversation between W. Averell Harriman and Joseph Stalin about the prospects of working with the Polish government during World War II.

### **Original Language:**

English

### **Contents:**

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Transcript - English

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

12 same person conversation

The American Ambassador

February 2, 1944.

Marshal Stalin  
Mr. Molotov

Place: Kremlin  
Time: 6 p.m.

Mr. Stevens  
Mr. Berezkhov

Conf. #171, W. Averell Harriman papers,  
The script Division Library Congress West PC  
USA

Subject: Soviet-Polish relations.

After completing discussion of the other subjects the Ambassador said that the President hoped some way might be found to solve the problem ~~was~~ <sup>and</sup> difficult <sup>with the</sup> Poles. In reply Marshal Stalin asked for a bulging brief case which was lying on the table and extracted a copy of "Niepodleglosc", which he said was printed by the Polish underground in Wilno. He pointed out that the streamer on this issue (July, 1943) read in Polish: "Hitler and Stalin - two aspects of the same evil". It was difficult, he continued, to deal with such people. They may be able to fool Mr. Eden, he added, but this shows their real character.

The Ambassador remarked that he had nothing to add to what the President had already said, but that if it were possible to find a solution it would be very desirable. Marshal Stalin replied that the Soviet Government was also interested in finding a solution. But what, he asked, can you advise us to do with such people.

*The President placed great importance on the solution of the question and*

The Ambassador said that if Marshal Stalin had any message to communicate to the President he would be glad to transmit it. Marshal Stalin indicated that he had nothing in mind. The Ambassador observed that the settlement of the Polish ques-

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tion was primarily of course a matter for Marshal Stalin to deal with.

Marshal Stalin then said that he would be glad if relations with the Polish Government could be improved but that he was convinced it could not be done as long as certain persons who were antagonistic to the Soviet Union remained in the Government. He mentioned particularly Sosnkowski and Kot. He said that Mikolajczyk might be all right, but that he was a weak man and completely under the thumb of Sosnkowski. These people would have to be removed before the Soviet Government could deal with the Polish Government in London. The Poles liked to think that the Russians were good fighters but that they were fools, and thought they could let the Russians carry the burden of the war and then step in at the end and participate in the spoils. The Poles would find out who were the **fools.**

FBS/

*Cham*

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

February 2, 1944.

The American Ambassador

Place: Kremlin

Time: 6 p.m.

Marshal Stalin

Mr. Molotov

*Copy to Mr. [unclear]  
Box # 171,*

*w. Averell Harriman papers, 100  
only copy given  
General Deane  
2/8/44  
R.M.*

Mr. Stevens

Mr. Berezkhov

Subject: Russian Bases for American shuttle bombers and  
photo reconnaissance planes.

The Ambassador stated that he had wanted an appointment with Marshal Stalin to discuss the military proposals made by the President at Tehran, particularly with reference to shuttle bombing. He stated that he was taking this matter up on instructions from General Marshall and General Arnold and with the ~~consent~~ consent of General Eisenhower. Daylight bombing can penetrate more deeply into Germany if American bombers from the United Kingdom and Italy ~~if bombers~~ are permitted to land regularly in the Soviet Union.

Marshal Stalin asked approximately how many planes would be involved. The Ambassador replied that it was contemplated to send one to three flights of 120 planes each ~~per day~~ <sup>out of three</sup>. We would like to have facilities for the full number of 360 planes if possible; if not the question would be subject to adjustment according to the possibilities. Stalin inquired whether the planes would be 4-engined bombers, to which the Ambassador replied that they would be Flying Fortresses or Liberators.

The Ambassador then stated that Stalin might recall that

*Handwritten notes on right margin, including "only copy given" and "General Deane 2/8/44 R.M."*

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*the Ambassador said they were in the Moscow office*  
mention had been made at Tehran of photo reconnaissance planes *✓*  
and that it had been proposed to make one flight per day, de-  
veloping the photos at the Soviet base and making them avail-  
able to the Soviet air force. The plane would return to its  
base as soon as possible. The question of the bombers and the  
photo reconnaissance planes is not necessarily connected; the  
flights of the latter could be started more easily. The staff  
of the United States Army Air Forces is ready to concert its  
plans with the Red Army Air staff and would consider bombing  
targets of interest to the Red Army on return flights. Like-  
wise photos of areas of interest to the Red Army could be  
taken by the photo reconnaissance planes on flights in either  
direction.

Stalin inquired whether the fuel would have to be supplied  
by the Soviet Union, and what octane content was required. The  
Ambassador replied that these planes used 100-octane gasoline.  
Fuel, spare parts and bombs would have to be brought in for the  
use of the planes, as well as anything else they required which  
was not standard equipment in the Red Army. The 100-octane gaso-  
line is ~~the same type as is~~ now being shipped to the Soviet Union,  
and that required ~~from~~ by the planes could be taken from the  
same stocks.

Stalin then asked what ground staff would be required for  
say 150 or 200 planes and whether it was intended that American  
or Soviet personnel be used. The Ambassador said that some  
American ~~staff~~ *staff* would be necessary, but that the number would  
depend on the wishes and convenience of the Red Air Force. *✓*

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Specialists on planes of this type would have to be brought in to supervise the work of the ground crews. When the planes land they require the services of a large number of men; if ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~crews~~ can be provided by the Russians it will be that much the better. ✓

Stalin said he was asking for this information in order to be able to make the necessary preparations. He said that 150 to 200 planes can be taken care of at the outset, and that later the number can be reconsidered. The Ambassador asked whether arrangements could also be made for one photo reconnaissance <sup>plane</sup>/per day to land at Soviet airfields from Great Britain and another plane from Italy. Stalin replied that he had already agreed to this at Tehran. He said it could be done and asked where the fields were desired. The Ambassador replied that one field in the north would be needed for the plane from Britain and another in the south for the plane from Italy. Stalin suggested to Molotov that a field near Veliki Luki would be satisfactory and added that it would be nearest. He said it was too bad the Red Army had not yet recaptured Orsha since there are excellent fields near that town. He then brought out a map of the front and indicated various possibilities, remarking that there was a good field at Kotli west of Leningrad. The Ambassador remarked that it was <sup>easy</sup> to change bases for photo reconnaissance planes ✓ and that the most suitable field would depend on the mission. <sup>As to this</sup>

Stalin then asked what kind of fields would be needed for 4-engined bombers. The Ambassador said that they fly in <sup>formation</sup> groups of <sup>about</sup> 120 planes, but that they would fan out to different bases

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after bombing their target. Stalin said he was thinking of giving them three fields in the north and three in the south. The Ambassador answered that this was perfect. He pointed out that the use of the fields by American bombers would require the coordination of radio information <sup>to arrange for landings</sup> to arrange for landings. Stalin expressed assent and stated that the ~~the~~ fields would be in-  
<sup>formed</sup> formed. The Ambassador also emphasized that the language difficulty would have to be overcome, to which Stalin also agreed. The Ambassador said that by making these fields available it would help greatly in preventing losses, particularly to lag-  
<sup>ging</sup> ging planes which had been damaged and might not otherwise be able to get back to their bases, <sup>on account of concentration of forces of planes</sup> especially in deep penetrations. Stalin remarked that the proposed plan would cause the Germans to feel the Allied blows more and added: "We favor it".

The Ambassador then inquired how the details of the operations should be worked out, and suggested that General Deane and Colonel Bond, the air officer of the Military Mission, were prepared to discuss it. Stalin replied that within two or three days he would ask Molotov and a representative of the Red Army to meet with the Ambassador and General Deane to discuss the matter further. The details could be settled in subsequent discussions between General Deane and the Red Army representative.

The Ambassador suggested that it might be necessary for Colonel Bond to inspect the six airports to make suggestions regarding necessary facilities and other matters. Stalin replied that arrangements could be made for him to visit the fields together with the Red Army representative.

FBS/

# *chm* (circled)

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

February 2, 1944.

The American Ambassador

Marshal Stalin  
Mr. Molotov

*Conference # 171, W. Averell  
Harris pp. 100.*

Place: Kremlin  
Time: 6 p.m.

Mr. Stevens  
Mr. Bereznev

*Walt*

*original to [unclear]  
10 to [unclear]  
G. H. [unclear]  
[unclear]*

Subject: Bases in Soviet Far East for American bombers.

After discussing bases in the West for shuttle bombers from Great Britain and Italy, the Ambassador stated that he desired to take up matters concerning the Pacific War which had been discussed with the President at Tehran. He said he understood the delicacy of this question, but pointed out that the planning of our whole Pacific strategy depends in large measure <sup>on the type of operation the Soviet Far East would give</sup> on the size of the <sup>U.S.</sup> bombing force which can be based on the Maritime Provinces or other Soviet territory in the Far East. He said it was easy enough to fly planes, but that the bases from which they operate <sup>at the supply question</sup> must be planned long before operations begin. <sup>Decisions on these matters</sup> ~~A decision concerning their location~~ must be reached at as early a date as possible and certainly prior to the defeat of Germany. Marshal Stalin indicated agreement with this viewpoint.

The Ambassador continued that the need for secrecy was obvious and that any arrangements Marshal Stalin may deem proper in this connection will be understood. However, planning for the size of a force to operate in the Far East and arrangements for its operations are matters of importance and we should therefore like to begin preliminary discussions as soon as possible.

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Marshal Stalin inquired who would represent the American Government in the discussions on this question. The Ambassador replied that he and General Deane would participate, and that Admiral Olsen would be brought in when naval questions were under consideration. He continued that he did not wish to go into too much detail, but said that ~~Admiral King had informed him~~ <sup>then</sup> ~~that~~ operations were planned against the Kuriles Islands and Paramushiro. The date of these operations might be advanced if Soviet forces were prepared to cooperate.

Marshal Stalin asked whether such cooperation was desired now or at a later date. The Ambassador replied that he was referring to the type of cooperation and strategic planning which was desired at a future date. He then showed Marshal Stalin

*to the Ambassador described briefly the strategic problems of the Pacific*  
 on a globe the present stage of operations in the Pacific. He said that the operations which had been going on in New Guinea were designed to cut the Japanese line of communications. *thus far* far it had been an offensive operation, but it would soon become a holding operation. The United States forces had taken the Gilberts and were now fighting for the Marshals. The objective of this drive through the central Pacific was Truk. If it falls, the whole southern theater of operations will drop off. It then becomes a question of whether further operations shall be concentrated in the center or the north. If there can be massed bombing from the north, the campaigns in Burma and the Philippines would be easier. ~~The north is therefore the key to future operations.~~ *the* The question of how large an air force we can base there is one to which we would like to have an answer as early as pos-

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sible. When it is received we can proceed to the preparation of plans.

Marshal Stalin replied that at present the Soviet Government is unable to take part in operations against Japan since its forces in the Far East are too small. It will be necessary to reequip the Red Air Force in the Far East before it can participate in operations. This is being done, but it will require another two or three months. By that time the Soviets hope they will have a new air force there. Four infantry corps of 20 to 22 divisions will then be transferred to the Far East. It can not be done now, as the Red Army is very busy in the West.

When German resistance in the West begins to weaken, divisions will be sent to the Far East. By the end<sup>of</sup> the summer the question of whether the divisions can be transferred will have been clarified. As soon as these forces are transferred, the Soviet Government will cease to fear Japanese provocation and may even provoke the Japanese itself. It is too weak to do so now, however, as such action might result in the loss of the coastal positions. Consequently there is no immediate possibility of cooperation in that theater; it can only materialize later.

With regard to the question of beginning conversations about

basing air forces in the Far East, the matter was discussed at Tehran and discussions can be continued. *Stalin stated that 6 fields can be made available* ~~for~~ 300 American planes <sup>to be</sup> based there - and here Marshal Stalin interposed

that there would also be <sup>a</sup> Soviet ~~planes~~ <sup>air bases</sup> - ~~6 fields will be needed.~~

The question of the location of these fields - whether on Kamchatka or near Vladivostok - must be considered. Marshal Stalin

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said he would invite the Chief of the Red Air Forces in the Far East to come to Moscow and bring a map showing the available air fields. The fields for bases for American planes can then be selected, and if the number is insufficient, new fields will be provided.

The Ambassador said that he knew the President understood Marshal Stalin's feelings about not provoking the Japanese until he is ready to do so. The President will be very pleased to receive this information. It will be communicated only to the President, General Marshall, General Arnold and Admiral King. It will be of great assistance in planning operations.

Marshal Stalin reiterated that if Japan is provoked now there is a danger of losing ~~all~~ <sup>the</sup> Soviet territory in the Far East. <sup>available for our bases</sup> The Ambassador replied that the President understood this and fully agreed. Marshal Stalin then emphasized that the information must be limited to a very small group, and said that on the Soviet side the matter would be handled by General Antonov.

The Ambassador pointed out that General Arnold had had <sup>1500</sup> 1000 planes in mind as the optimum number to permit the full weight of an air attack to be made against Japan. ~~If the Soviet Government finds it impossible to make bases available for this number, the question can be reconsidered.~~ <sup>would have to</sup> Marshal Stalin replied that if that number were to be based in the Far East new fields will have to be built. He said that they would see what was possible. Decisions can be reached after the map is received <sup>after</sup> ~~and discussing with the Chief of the Red Air Forces in the Far East.~~

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FBS/

Container # 171 277  
W.A. Harrison papers LOC

Far East

PARAPHRASE OF OUTGOING NAVY CABLE - MOSCOW, February 2, 1944

~~SECRET~~ - U.S.URGENT

FOR THE EYES OF THE PRESIDENT ONLY, PERSONAL AND ~~SECRET~~:

This afternoon I saw Marshal Stalin and discussed with him in detail the military proposals submitted by you to him at Teheran.

He agreed to provide on Soviet air fields facilities for shuttle bombing for 150 to 200 U.S. heavy bombers as a starter and for daily U.S. photo reconnaissance planes from Italy and England. This accords with request we have received recently from General Arnold approved by General Eisenhower. Deane is cabling further details to Arnold. Discussions to implement this decision will be arranged immediately between us and the Soviet Air Staff.

I then brought up the question of planning for use by American heavy bombers of Soviet air bases in the East after Russia enters the war against Japan. Stalin repeated and amplified what he stated at Teheran in regard to Soviet present air and ground strength in the East and said that he could not afford to provoke an incident now. He added that because of their preoccupation in the West they could not yet strengthen their army, though they were increasing their air strength.

He told me categorically (after I had explained in detail the importance of our knowing at the earliest moment what facilities could be made available) that facilities would be provided to base three hundred U.S. heavy bombers in addition to Russian bombers, and agreed to have the Chief of their Far

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Approved for release by:  [Signature]

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

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February 2, 1944.

Eastern Air Forces come to Moscow shortly to discuss the location of suitable bases with Deane. I explained that General Arnold had contemplated the basing of as many as a thousand bombers in this area. Stalin replied Quote Then we must ~~will~~ build new fields. We will see what is possible. Unquote.

That these discussions must be kept within the narrowest limits was emphasized by Marshal Stalin. I explained that I would report it to you and that undoubtedly you would inform Leahy, Marshall, King and Arnold, but that I could assure him it would not be communicated to anyone else except those immediately involved. I hope this commitment can be respected. General Arnold should inform General Deane promptly as to the preferred general locations of the air fields as between the Vladivostok area and Kamchatka and be given any further instructions or details that may be required for his discussions with the Soviet Far Eastern air chief.

In accordance with your request at Teheran, Stalin agreed to exchange intelligence information regarding Japan. He stated, however, that the Soviet information was not Quote rich Unquote. He also agreed to expand the weather information now provided for us.

I brought up your request for advance planning of naval operations but he did not appear familiar with the subject and we reached no conclusion.

~~SECRET~~

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February 2, 1944.



Approval was given by Stalin to certain other military matters we have up.

The conversation, which lasted for an hour and a half, could not have been more friendly and Stalin could not have shown a greater disposition to be cooperative. Before giving his approval he asked detailed questions about each point. In subsequent cables I will report the information which he volunteered at some length indicating the extreme concern of the Japanese regarding their present position. He also touched on Poland.

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Container # 171, W. A. Harriman papers  
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Conversation.

February 2, 1944  
The Kremlin

Present: The American Ambassador, Mr. Harriman  
Marshal Stalin  
Mr. V. M. Molotov

Mr. F. B. Stevens, Second Secretary of  
the American Embassy  
Mr. Bereshkov, Soviet interpreter

Subject: Improvement of air and signal communications  
between Washington and Moscow.

The Ambassador stated that the last two questions he desired to take up had both been raised at the Moscow Conference. They concerned the improvement of air and signal communications between Washington and Moscow. With reference to signal communications, he stated that an excellent radio circuit had been established between Tehran and Washington; if Moscow could be tied into this circuit communications would be speeded up greatly. The circuit would of course be available for Soviet traffic if the Soviet Government desired to use it.

Marshal Stalin replied that he thought this could be done, and Molotov nodded acquiescence.

With regard to air communications, the Ambassador stated that he had asked the privilege of sending in one 4-motored plane each week to handle important mail and passenger traffic from Tehran and Cairo for Moscow.

At this point Molotov interjected that he felt it might be a good idea to sign an agreement similar to that between the Soviets and the British which provides for Soviet operation on the line between Moscow and Tehran and for British operation beyond that point.

The Ambassador continued that we would like to send in one 4-motored plane per week on any basis of reciprocity which the Soviets might propose. The advantage of the 4-motored plane is that it can fly through or around bad weather and thus avoid costly delays. We will attempt to arrange for any reciprocal privileges which may be desired by the Soviet Union.

ENC  
W. A. Harriman  
1944  
Stalin

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Marshal Stalin then stated that if permission is granted for American planes to proceed to Moscow it would constitute a precedent for other embassies. He stated that he did not see why the Ambassador insisted on pressing this matter.

The Ambassador replied that the only other country for which such a service might constitute a precedent would be Great Britain. Molotov stated again that the agreement with the British provides for a connection at Tehran. He added that conversations were begun last year for an agreement with the United States but that nothing had come of them.

The Ambassador stated that we attach importance to this question because the longer range of the planes and the regularity of service which would be possible would be of great convenience to important persons connected with the war effort who frequently have to come to Moscow. He pointed out that there is complete reciprocity in the use of facilities between the United States and Great Britain and that planes of one country are constantly flying over territory of the other.

Marshal Stalin replied that he realized such a service would be a convenience for passengers, but said that it would not be convenient for the Soviet Government. He then suggested that the United States might consider selling to the Soviet Union 4-engined planes which could be flown by Soviet pilots. He added that incidentally the Soviet Union would soon have some planes of their own of this type.

The Ambassador said he was under constant pressure from Washington to establish this service. He said that the American Government, General Marshall and the Army attach great importance to it. Our planes would conform to any regulations which the Soviet Government might see fit to impose. The Ambassador said he hoped Marshal Stalin might be able to arrange for the service to begin. Convenient connections are tremendously important in cutting down the time required to reach Washington. Members of General Donovan's staff, for instance, who left Moscow on the Ambassador's plane, reached Washington in six days. This is the only reason for our desire for speedy communications.

The Ambassador added that in August 1942 Marshal Stalin had placed great importance on transport planes and that he had accordingly given the matter close attention. Transport planes are now coming forward to the Soviet Union in greater numbers. If the Soviet Government desires to obtain 4-motored planes the Ambassador stated that he would try to arrange to procure them. He



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emphasized, however, that we still desire to establish the weekly service.

Marshal Stalin remarked that the Soviet Union had received no 4-engined planes from the United States. The Ambassador replied that thus far only two-engined planes had been provided, but said that if 4-engined planes were needed he was willing to take the matter up with Washington.

Marshal Stalin answered that the Soviet Union would be pleased to buy some 4-engined planes, even outside the scope of Lend-Lease, but added that he had not raised the question since he knew the United States needed all it could produce. The Ambassador asked that the question be allowed to remain open.

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Original Scan  
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Herring papers LOC

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

February 2, 1944.

The American Ambassador

Place: Kremlin  
Time: 6 p.m.

Marshal Stalin  
Mr. Molotov

Mr. Stevens  
Mr. Berezhkov

Subject: Expansion of exchange of weather information.

The Ambassador stated that it would be useful to have Stalin's assistance in arranging to expand the exchange of weather information relating to the Pacific area. Stalin indicated that it would be possible to expand this service.

FBS/

*[Handwritten signature]*

*[Handwritten initials]*

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*Militar - FE*MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

February 2, 1944. 50

The Ambassador

Place: Kremlin

Marshal Stalin

Time: 6 p.m.

Mr. Molotov

Mr. Berezkhov

Mr. Stevens

*Continued to 171, W.A.  
Harris papers, LOC.*

Subject: Exchange of Military Information.

During his conversation with Marshal Stalin the Ambassador stated that among the minor matters he desired to mention was that of the exchange of military information. He inquired whether such military intelligence information on Japan as was in the possession of the Soviet military intelligence could be made available to us.

Marshal Stalin replied that the Soviet information on Japan was not very rich, but that what there was would be made available. The Ambassador replied that our information was also very incomplete, but pointed out that by assembling what we possess jointly it might be possible to piece together a useful picture. Stalin replied that the Soviets would not conceal the information they have.

FBS/

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Mr. Molotov                      □    Time: 6 p.m.

Mr. Stevens

Mr. Berezkhov

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