

June 10, 1944

Stalin and Harriman discuss Far East Air Power

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Summary:

Ambassador Harriman and Stalin discuss using Far East air bases for American troops and American's training Soviet pilots.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to President Roosevelt^[1]

Moscow, 11 June 1944

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Personal for the President. In my talk with Stalin yesterday evening we discussed in considerable detail the participation of the Soviet Union in the Japanese war and in that connection China. I brought up the question of basing our bombers in the Soviet Far East and stated that you and our chiefs of Staff believed no time should be lost in coming to an agreement and in working out the necessary plans for supplies. He agreed that this was desirable and stressed that it was not only a question of the Air Force but that the ground operations and naval operations should be considered as well. He explained that there were now 12 air fields, some of them new in the area between Vladivostok and Sovietskaya Gavan suitable for heavy bombers and that we could expect to receive the use of 6 or 7 of them. More with metal strips could be provided if necessary. It is evident that since my talk with Stalin in February the Soviets have gone ahead with the construction of heavy bomber bases in the Far East, using, I believe, the experience gained from us in preparation of the fields for shuttle bombing.^[2] Stalin agreed that it would be desirable to start promptly in building up reserves of gasoline and other supplies using the Pacific route as the Japanese no longer interfered. I explained that it was hoped that the northern convoys could be resumed again at a later date so that this stocking could be done without interference with the protocol commitments. Stalin asked whether the British would have to participate in these discussions and stated bluntly that his military did not trust General Burrows^[3] the present head of the British Military Mission. He explained that this was personal in respect to General Burrows and he was not speaking of the British in general. In reply to my direct inquiry he stated that they had full confidence in General Deane. I said that these discussions would be carried on between General Deane, his Sir Officer General Walsh,^[4] and Naval Officer Admiral Olson, with the appropriate Soviet Officers and that it was not necessary to involve the British at this time as they did not have day bombers. At a later stage when the entire strategy of the Pacific War was considered the British of course would be involved. He agreed that these discussions should start promptly. I could not pin him down on a date but he assured me that it would not be long delayed, saying, "the sooner the better". Stalin brought up the question of the supplying by us of heavy bombers for the Red Air Force. I explained that General Arnold was ready to begin to deliver them beginning in the Autumn after agreement had been reached regarding our operation from Soviet Far Eastern bases. We would not only give them the planes but would help train the Soviet crews in the flying of the bombers and in the tactical operations either in the United States or by sending instructors to the Soviet Union. He said he would prefer to have instructors come to the Soviet Union as only trained Soviet pilots and navigators would be used. These are of course details that can be worked out later.

63[Orig. Note] Copy of telegram obtained from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.

64[Orig. Note] The First shuttle raiding bombers of the 15th Army Air Force reached the Soviet Union on June 2, 1944. Units of American bombers raided military objectives in the area of Galatz in Rumania on June 6, operating from air bases within the Soviet Union in cooperation with Soviet aircraft. In despatch[Sic] 563, June 12, 1944, the Minister Counselor of Embassy in the Soviet Union, Maxwell M. Hamilton, enclosed newspaper clippings on this raid and other Allied military operations and made this observation: The cordial tone of these articles is typical of all comment on Allied operations which has appeared in the Soviet press since the capture of Rome [on June 4]. The chary praise and carping criticism which has been a feature of Soviet press comment on Allied military operations up to this time is now conspicuously absent and has been replaced by a note of admiration and appreciation for the recent military achievements of Anglo-American military forces." (740.0011 European War 1939/6-1244)

65[Orig. Note] Lt. Gen. Montagu Brocas Burrows, head of the British Supply Mission in

the Soviet Union.

66[Orig. Note] Maj. Gen. Robert LeGrow Walsh, air member of the United States Military Mission in the Soviet Union.

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