

September 23, 1944

Harriman's Telegram to the President

Citation:

"Harriman's Telegram to the President", September 23, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, eds. Bryton Barron, William M. Franklin, and G. Bernard Noble (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), 5.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/219999>

Summary:

Harriman updates Roosevelt on Stalin's recent illness and a possible future meeting in the Mediterranean in November.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

Roosevelt Papers: Telegram

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

TOP SECRET

□□□Moscow, 24 September 1944.

□Personal and Top Secret for the eyes of the President only from Harriman.

□This evening I explained to Marshal Stalin that you had asked General Hurley to call on him to explain your concern over China and to give him personally a message regarding a future meeting. Stalin interrupted to say that he had been ill with the grippe when Hurley was in Moscow, that in the past he had been able to shake it in a few days but that this time he had been ill for several weeks. He looked more worn out than I have ever seen him and not as yet fully recovered. I explained that you had in mind a meeting in the latter part of November and that as it was too late for Alaska the Mediterranean might provide a suitable place. He said that a meeting was very desirable but that he was afraid his doctors would not allow him to travel. It had taken him two weeks to get over an ear attack he had had from his flight from Teheran and his recent illness had been due to a trip to the front. I suggested that the warm weather in the Mediterranean would do him good but he said his doctors considered any change of climate would have a bad effect. Molotov claimed that his associates felt Stalin must protect his health and that traveling was not good for him. Stalin then said that Molotov was strong and vigorous and that as his Deputy a man in whom he had great confidence he could meet you and the Prime Minister any time you wished. I assured Stalin that you liked Molotov and were always glad to see him but suggested that his doctors might later on take a different view of the desirability of a warm climate particularly if the trip would be made by sea. Jokingly I suggested also the possibility of his having some new doctors by that time. He agreed that might be a good idea but gave no further encouragement. I am satisfied that Stalin is anxious to meet you but he is definitely worried about his health. Although Stalin showed the effects of his grippe I do not feel that you need have any concern over the possibility of serious illness.

1[orig. note] Sent by the United States Naval Attache, Moscow, via Navy channels.

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