

July 19, 1949

Cable from Moscow to the Foreign Office

Citation:

"Cable from Moscow to the Foreign Office", July 19, 1949, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archives of the UK
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/134387>

Summary:

The British ambassador to the Soviet Union and Stalin meet to discuss relations between their two countries. Conversation focused primarily on British intentions within NATO and reconstruction efforts.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

Cable from Moscow to the Foreign Office

Cyber/OTP
POLITICAL DISTRIBUTION

FROM MOSCOW TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Sir D. Kelly □□□

□□□□

No. 608

D.

1.11 p.m.

19th July, 1949 □□□

□□□□

19th July, 1949

R.

3.50 p.m.

19th July, 1949 □□ □□

IMMEDIATE

CONFIDENTIAL

□My telegram No. 599. Interview with Stalin.

□The Generalissimo received me last night at 10 p.m. (Moscow Time) in the Kremlin. I was accompanied by Mr. Harrison, with Mr. Hayward as interpreter. On the Russian side Vyshinsky was in attendance, with Pavlov as interpreter. Following is a verbatim record of conversation.

□Sir. D. Kelly: "I am very glad to have this early opportunity of meeting you, Generalissimo Stalin, as I am aware how busy you are as Chairman of the Council Ministers. I wish to pay my respects and not to discuss any specific issues, but would like to take the opportunity to tell you of the main lines of my general instructions.

□

□I start from two fundamental points. First is the statement which you, Generalissimo, have made several times, that it is possible for our two countries with their respective systems, to exist side by side; that there is room in the world for both to exist without injuring each other's essential interest. It is quite clear that to achieve this there must be better understanding on each side of the other's interests and point of view, and it is my hope that I may be given all possible assistance at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to enable me to pass on to my Government the Soviet point of view. If I may give in return similar explanations of my Government's point of view, this exchange should really aid in the improvement of relations.

□The second basic point is that Mr. Bevin has said over and over again that there is no possibility of aggression from our side; that we have no thought of endangering the Soviet Union. Mr. Bevin in this is, without a doubt, speaking for the British Government and the British people as a whole; whenever suspicions arise about this, they can only be due to misunderstandings and it will always be my first duty to discuss them and try to find a way out. Besides these general assurances, our two countries have some very important common interests. One is the great reconstruction work in which we are both engage. I know of the devastation created by the Germans in Russia and of the immense effort of reconstruction which is now

bearing fruit in an improved standard of living. In our country we have had a million houses destroyed by bombing and we have financial and economic problems as well which we are making a great and united effort to overcome. We both can afford material help to each other. I am therefore very anxious to promote more trade relations and, although contact is normally between the Board of Trade in London and the Trade Commissars in the Soviet Union, I shall always be glad to assist at any time when difficulties arise on which I can be of use.

□Secondly, both our countries have suffered from two great wars with Germany and we are united in our determination never to allow Germany to attack either of us again. We deeply hope that the relief in the situation created by the Paris Conference will lead to further discussions and a final solution".

□Stalin: "That is true. Unquestionably our two countries can co-exist, and develop without injuring each other's interests. Suspicions existing at the present time are somewhat preventing our relations from improving and being placed on friendly footing. On this point the Ambassador is right. Suspicions on our part became stronger after the signing of the North Atlantic Pact. I hope it will prove to be purposeless. (His translator said "meaningless"). We have no intention of attacking anyone it is not easy to provoke us. Therefore I am not frightened by the pact. In the long run our two countries will understand each other. As to the two points in common, I think in this respect also the Ambassador is right. These two points also induce us to understand each other. The Ambassador can count on my rendering him all possible assistance in improving relations between our two countries."

□Sir D. Kelly: "If I might comment on the Generalissimo's remarks about the North Atlantic Pact, I would explain that we regard it as a stabilizing factor designed to reassure the peoples in the Western countries. It is difficult to understand why it should cause suspicion when the Soviet Union has such close relations and alliances with neighboring countries. We raise no objection to them. The pact is indeed looser than the Soviet Union's relations with her neighbors. We regard the Pact as a stabilizing factor as you regard your pacts with neighboring countries".

Stalin: "All the same we Russians would not be prepared to conclude such a pact against Great Britain".

Sir D. Kelly: "It is not a pact against you any more than your alliances are directed against us".

Stalin: "Ours are all directed exclusively against Germany".

Sir D. Kelly: "I am afraid we do not see eye to eye on this question".

Stalin: "No. (After a pause). Why are there American forces in England? Are they too a stabilizing factor?"

Sir D. Kelly: "We know the United States of American and do not believe they could be drawn into a war except in self-defense. It would not be possible to draw the American people into a war of aggression".

At this point Stalin took out his pipe sat back in his chair and asked me a number of personal questions: Whether this was my first visit to Moscow; whether I could speak Russian, etc. After a few moments exchange of conversation he asked whether there was any way in which he could be of service to me.

Sir D. Kelly: "May I amplify about exchanges of views. I have been sorry to see that so

many of my predecessor's visits to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were concerned with personal matters affecting the Embassy. Mr. Bevin had spoken to Mr. Vyshinsky in Paris of the value of diplomatic preparation for conferences and I shall be very happy to have more general conversations from time to time on wider subjects so as to be able to keep Mr. Bevin informed of the point of view of the Soviet Government. AS it is, conversations at the Ministry are apt to be confined to personal questions, such as relations of members of the staff with Russian ladies".

Stalin: (Laughing) "Such questions arise from boredom".

On this not the interview closed, having lasted exactly 25 minutes.

Stalin appeared to be in good health and shewed [sic] that he had been following the conversations closely by replying to my opening remarks without having taken notes and without a single glance at Vyshinsky. His manner was affable throughout and interview ended on a laugh.

As far as is known, this is the first interview of this kind that Stalin has accorded to a foreign Ambassador for several years.