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Conversation.

The Far East

June 10, 1944
The Kremlin

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

Mr. Page, Second Secretary of Embassy
Mr. Pavlov, Secretary to Mr. Molotov

Subject: The Far East.

I stated that the President did not wish to minimize the hard battles that confront the Allied armies in Europe but wanted to be prepared for all eventualities. He had therefore instructed the Chiefs of Staff to plan for the defeat of Japan after Germany had been brought to its knees. The President had asked me to raise again with Marshal Stalin the question I had discussed with him last February, regarding the cooperation of the Soviet Union with the United States in the speedy defeat of the Japanese. I said that plans are now being made as to the disposition of the American Air Force after the defeat of Hitler and stated that the President was anxious to know how soon Stalin would be ready to initiate secret talks on the use of American air forces on Soviet bases in the East and also coordination of naval plans. I added that it was not only a question of bases or airfields but also one of supplies and routes to be used to supply our Air Force in the East.

The Marshal stated that he thought that the question was one of joint cooperation in waging war on land and sea as well as in the air. He said that it would also be necessary to hold secret conversations on the use of land forces and the Navy. I said that the President certainly agreed with him.

The Marshal said that there were twelve airfields in the area between Vladivostok and Sovietski Gavan which were suitable for four-engine bombers. The United States could expect to receive the use of six or seven of them. He added that new "metallically constructed" fields could be built if the need for them arose. He explained that he had called in the Commander-in-Chief of the Far Eastern Air Force and had discussed the question with him.

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I repeated that the President would like to have discussions initiated on this question as soon as the Marshal was ready. The Marshal emphasized the need for the utmost secrecy in order that nothing might leak out.

Commenting on the need for stocking supplies in the Eastern area, I stated that, as the Marshal knew, the President and the Prime Minister were most anxious to open the northern convoys. When this was done, the capacity of the ports of the three routes, that is the Northern, the Persian Gulf, and the Pacific, would permit the building up of supplies in Siberia without interfering with the protocol commitments. The Marshal stated that it was advisable to accumulate supplies and particularly fuel through Vladivostok and said that this could now be done "legally". He explained that the Japanese were not interfering with Russian shipping in the Pacific and suggested that this route be taken advantage of in order to carry fuel into the area. I stated that the President hoped that discussions on this subject might soon be initiated between General Beane and whomever Stalin might designate.

The Marshal inquired as to the possibility of receiving several hundred four-engine planes for the Far East for the carrying on of Soviet operations. He said that the Russians only had two-engine bombers. I said that the President and Chiefs of Staff had given consideration to this matter and that ~~we~~ we could come to an agreement on the Far Eastern program, steps would be taken in this direction since it was agreed by all that the operations from Siberia against the Japanese should be on a combined American-Soviet basis. The Marshal inquired as to the position of the British. I said that the British had no daylight bombers and therefore were not involved in this. The Marshal asked about the British Fleet. I replied that the main strategy of destroying the Japanese was a matter for the three Allies.

I remarked that one weapon we had developed ahead of all the other nations was the four-engine bomber for daylight bombing. This applied not only to the plane itself but to its instruments and operation. I said that the President would like nothing better than to have combined American-Soviet air operations against the Japanese. I remarked that I believed that early in the autumn there would be four-engine bombers available for the Soviet Government if agreement on the bases could be worked out.

I said that from our experience it took six months to train heavy bomber personnel. The Marshal replied that the Russians would take less time since they would

use experienced pilots and navigators for the purpose. I inquired whether it would be preferable to send Soviet air men to the United States or American instructors to the Soviet Union. The Marshal stated that he thought it would be easier to send some American instructors here. He said that his people had flown the Flying Fortress and liked it. We then had a brief discussion on the relative merits of the B-17 and the B-24 in which I emphasized the qualities of the B-24. I then repeated that the President would like to have intimate and secret discussions on the actual program for the air operations against the Japanese and on the question as to what part would be played by the United States and the Soviet Union. After that, I said, we would come to an agreement as to the number of planes to be turned over to the Red Air Force and as to the training of personnel. The Marshal stated that he hoped that the planes would be received with all the instruments mounted. I replied that this of course would be done.

With respect to the supply problem, I said that naval strategy in the Pacific would have to be taken into consideration. The Red Army would require a great deal of the capacity of the Siberian railroad and we of course would like to know how much capacity could be allocated for the Air Force. The Marshal stated that this of course was a subject that would have to be gone into. I said that the Navy had plans, which they were not yet ready to undertake, to occupy the northern part of the Kurile Islands. When this was done, convoys could proceed to the mouth of the Amur River -- to Nikolaevsk. This would be necessary because we believed it would be impossible to keep Vladivostok open. I said that we assumed that barges could be provided, in addition to those at the disposal of the Russians, for bringing supplies up the Amur. This, I said, was another matter we would like to discuss. The third question was that of an air route through Fairbanks over Siberia or via the Aleutians to Petropavlovsk. The Marshal favored the second route as being closer. These were the matters, I said, the President desired the Military Mission in Moscow to discuss whenever Marshal Stalin was ready.

The Marshal asked whether the British would participate in the discussions. I replied in the negative, stating that the discussions would be American-Soviet since under present plans America was taking the lead in the Pacific area. At a later stage the British could of course come in. The Marshal stated bluntly that the Soviet military authorities did not trust General Burrows,

that he was speaking of Burros personally and not of the British in general. I said that I hoped the Russian military authorities trusted General Deane. He replied that they had full confidence in him. I said that I only wished to have men here whom we all could trust.

I concluded that the President hoped that the discussions under reference would start as soon as possible under the direction of General Deane who had a senior air officer as a member of his Mission, Major General Walsh, and that if any naval matters came up Admiral Olsen was of course available. I inquired how soon the Marshal thought it possible to start the discussions. The Marshal replied that preparations must first be initiated. However, I could not pin him down on a date; he said "no time should be lost and the sooner the discussions started, the better it would be".

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