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September 23, 1944
Stalin, Harriman and Kerr Discuss a Future Meeting

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Summary:

Ambassadors Harriman and Kerr discuss the possibility of a future "big three" meeting with Stalin.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

THE AMBASSADOR

TOP SECRET

Conversation. September 23, 1944.

Present: The American Ambassador, Mr. Harriman
Mr. Edward Page, Second Secretary of Embassy

The British Ambassador, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr
Major A. H. Birse, Second Secretary of Embassy

Marshal I. V. Stalin
Mr. V. M. Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs
Mr. Pavlov, Soviet interpreter

Subject: Meeting between the President, the Prime Minister, and Marshal Stalin.

I explained to Marshal Stalin that the President had asked General Hurley to call on him in order, inter alia, to give him a personal message regarding a future meeting between the President, the Prime Minister, and Marshal Stalin. I continued that the President had in mind a meeting in the latter part of November and that as it was too late to go to Alaska the Mediterranean area offered possibility. I remarked that the President was not asking for a commitment in this respect; he merely hoped that Marshal Stalin would keep such a meeting in mind and would give him his views thereon.

Marshal Stalin replied that such a meeting was of course very desirable, but that on more frequent intervals he had been more and more indisposed. Old age, he said, was creeping up on him. In the past he would recover from grippe within two or three days but now he could not shake off such attacks under a week or two. I expressed my sincere regrets and remarked that perhaps the Mediterranean sun might be helpful. He replied that his doctors considered any change of climate had a bad effect on him. His present case of grippe was the result of a visit to the Front.

Molotov chimed in that his associates felt that Marshal Stalin must protect himself and that traveling was not good for him.

I said that I knew the President would be very much concerned at not being able to meet again with Marshal Stalin. The Marshal replied that Molotov, as his first deputy and a man in whom he had complete confidence, could replace him. He was strong and vigorous. Molotov remarked that he never could replace Marshal Stalin. The Marshal gave him a kindly look and said, "You are too modest."

I assured Marshal Stalin that the President liked Mr. Molotov and was always glad to see him, but that he would hope the question could be reconsidered. I knew that the President would be gravely concerned at hearing of Marshal Stalin's present illness. The British Ambassador interjected that this concern was equally shared by the Prime Minister. I suggested that perhaps the Marshal's doctors might later take a different view on the desirability of a warm climate, especially if the trip could be made by sea. Jokingly I suggested the possibility of his having some new doctors by that time. Marshal Stalin replied that his doctors would not let him go out. However, if he had always followed the advice of his doctors he would have been driven to the grave a long time ago. They were always too cautious. Healthy people could fly where they liked. I remarked that the President was not allowed to fly over 7000 feet, to which

Stalin replied that on his return trip from Tehran he had flown at 4000 meters and that it had taken him several weeks to recover from an ear illness incurred on this trip. Stalin remarked that the Prime Minister was the healthiest old man -a "desperate fellow". I said that the Prime Minister was using all his energies to defeat Hitler. After that he would not care what happened. The British Ambassador remarked that Mr. Churchill would never rest until the Japanese were beaten.

EP:nn