

June 28, 1944
PARAPHRASE of telegram sent from Harriman to Roosevelt

Citation:

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Summary:

Stalin and Harriman discuss the Normandy Invasion, military matters, and ally relations.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

- English Transcription
- Scan of Original Document

PARAPHRASE of telegram dated June 28, 1944, sent from Moscow via ARMY.

From Ambassador Harriman. ~~Secret~~ for President Roosevelt.

After I had presented the scrolls, Stalin with great enthusiasm expressed his admiration for the manner in which the invasion had been carried out. The crossing of the channel and the Normandy landing he described as "an unheard of achievement" of a magnitude such as had never been undertaken in the history of warfare. Stalin appeared well informed of the details of the operation. The landing of 650,000 men in so short a time, which he characterized as an unbelievable accomplishment, especially impressed him.

The Marshal inquired whether I recalled the Tehran discussions. Upon my congratulating him on the success of the offensive of the Red Army, he remarked in good humor that doubts as to whether he would live up to his commitments had existed in some quarters. I replied that I could assure him, as a result of my talks with you, General Eisenhower, General Marshall, General Arnold and Admiral King, that there had never been the slightest doubt in your minds that he would carry out his commitment to start the offensive and that it would be successful, and that in fact it was upon this confidence that all of our plans were based. Although Marshal Stalin remarked that others had not had such confidence, he was obviously pleased to hear this.

I went on that General Eisenhower and General Marshall had not even considered it necessary to inquire as to the character and place of the Soviet offensive in view of their confidence that whatever was most effective in conducting the offensive would be done by Marshal Stalin and the Red Army. Staff. [sic].

I mentioned, however, my belief that after we were well established in Northern France the Soviets would wish to set up close liaison for the coordination of plans between the Red Army and the Anglo-American forces. Stalin agreed as to the necessity of this. In telling me of his message to you and the Prime Minister of June 21 regarding the opening of the Soviet offensive and the number of divisions involved, Stalin said that for fear of a possible leak he had not included the exact location of the offensive. Damage to our mutual cause would have been caused from possible publication of the information for personal profit by newspapermen who might have got hold of it.

In some detail Stalin explained the leak that had occurred in the British press over the exchange of cables between himself and Mr. Churchill relating to the treating of the German army as prisoners of war. I said that although I could not discuss this matter which was between him and the Prime Minister, I could on the other hand assure him that the closest security on military plans had been established between ourselves and the British; that, as he knew, our operations in North Africa and the time and place of our landings in Northern France had been kept completely secret; and that our operations in the Pacific had likewise been conducted with the same security. The matter referred to by Marshal Stalin was not military in nature, but political.

In reply to his argument that an American officer had been indiscreet in England, I told the Marshal that the officer had been severely disciplined, demoted and returned to the United States, if I understood the case he had in mind. He seemed satisfied and remarked that the same type of discipline arose in the Soviet Army.

Stalin continued that for the exchange of this information he thought a military staff should be set up. I stated that General Deane would probably leave in about two weeks to consult with General Marshall and General Eisenhower on this subject, which of course would be on a combined Anglo-American basis. I stressed that never before in history had two nations fought together so closely as one force as did the British and American military forces, between whom complete confidence and cooperation existed.

I am satisfied, as a result of this conversation, that Marshal Stalin is prepared to establish liaison between the Red Army Staff and General Eisenhower. However, the matter should be carefully worked out, in view of his doubts about our security. It is my recommendation that General Deane be consulted before decision is reached and that he be used as the American officer on account of the confidence the Soviets have shown in him.

Stalin's lack of confidence in General Burrows, head of the British Military Mission in Moscow (previously reported by me), gives me concern because the British may possibly wish to use him in this connection. If it is considered advisable, I could readily pursue this matter further with Marshal Stalin, although I have not yet done so.

It is suggested that our Chiefs of Staff be shown this telegram.

W.A. Harriman papers Loc

44 6-26 Telegram re Stalin's description of Normandy Mtg

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