

June 10, 1944

Stalin and Harriman Discuss the Military Situation

Citation:

"Stalin and Harriman Discuss the Military Situation", June 10, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Container # 172, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/219909>

Summary:

Ambassador Harriman and Stalin discuss D-Day and future Russian offensives including Finland.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

303

44-6-10

SECRET

Container 172, W.A. Harriman papers
LOC

Stalin's conversation
with Mr. Molotov
Conversation, re military

June 10, 1944
The Kremlin

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

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

Subject: The Military Situation.

ovisi...

I said that I did not know whether Marshal Stalin knew all the details as to the disposition of the Anglo-American troops in Northern France and showed to him a map which indicated their positions, stating that they were as of yesterday morning and that no important changes had taken place except that more troops and supplies had been landed. Marshal Stalin stated that "the history of war had never seen such a grandiose operation, that Napoleon himself had never even attempted it, and that Hitler had envisaged it but was a fool for never having attempted it".

I stated that according to my reports, the landings had been less difficult than originally feared. Rommel had prepared obstacles under the water but these had been destroyed by our men, dry shod, at low tide. The next phase of the operations had not developed so quickly because of bad weather and rough water. Although the combined air forces were doing everything possible, the weather was not propitious for air operations. Nonetheless, taking the good news with the bad, events were moving satisfactorily. Marshal Stalin commented on the vast scale of the operations with entire armies being landed. He said that he believed it was sufficient to seize eight kilometers in depth and then build up. He appeared intensely interested in the operations and highly appreciative of their magnitude and seriousness.

The Marshal stated that the Soviet summer offensive had been delayed ten days because the clearing of the Crimea and the subsequent delayed moving of troops. However, an offensive had been launched today north of Leningrad on the Karelian Peninsula; in ten to fifteen days another offensive would be launched elsewhere; and in July the general offensive would be at its full force. The Leningrad offensive was merely the first stage. Here the Soviet armies had broken through the Finnish lines and had advanced.

Reproduced from the Collections of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

With concurrence of
EO 12356, Sec. 1.2 (a)
ACDC/ISR by

Handwritten notes and signatures at bottom right.

-2-

I inquired whether there was anything the President could do vis-à-vis Finland. The Marshal replied in the negative, stating that the Finns must be beaten by force. "They are a serious, stubborn, blunt people and sense must be hammered into them." I said that the President was always glad to receive suggestions with regard to Finland. The Marshal stated that he had no new proposals. He commented on the possibility of America breaking off relations with Finland, adding that of course he would not venture to propose such a step since it might not fit in with the President's plans and might do him harm in the elections. I replied that frankly the President had given consideration to this step, that his mind was always open on the question, but that he felt that such a step would be the last round of ammunition. I added that the present thinking in Washington was that the President could be more helpful by not breaking off relations with Finland. The Marshal agreed and stated that this was very possible. I said that if there was any concrete action the President might take which the Marshal considered would be of value, he would always be glad to receive suggestions.

Marshal Stalin said that there were no alterations in Soviet plans vis-à-vis Finland. He wanted an independent Finland. But the Finnish lines were twenty kilometers from Leningrad and must be pushed back to give security to that city. But Finnish independence must be preserved. However, the Finnish Government must be changed and the Finnish people should be encouraged to choose a new Government.

EP:nn

SECRET

Conversation 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 Military Situation.

I said that I did not know whether Marshal Stalin knew all the details as to the disposition of the Anglo-American troops in Northern France and showed to him a map which indicated their positions, stating that they were as of yesterday morning and that no important changes had taken place except that more troops and supplies had been landed. Marshal Stalin stated that "the history of war had never seen such a grandiose operation, that Napoleon himself had never even attempted it, and that Hitler had envisaged it but was a fool for never having attempted it".

I stated that according to my reports, the landings had been less difficult than originally feared. Rommel had prepared obstacles under the water but these had been destroyed by our men, dry shod, at low tide. The next phase of the operations had not developed so quickly because of bad weather and rough water. Although the combined air forces were doing everything possible, the weather was not propitious for air operations. Nonetheless, taking the good news with the bad, events were moving satisfactorily. Marshal Stalin commented on the vast scale of the operations with entire armies being landed. He said that he believed it was sufficient to seize eight kilometers in depth and then build up. He appeared intensely interested in the operations and highly appreciative of their magnitude and seriousness.

The Marshal stated that the Soviet summer offensive had been delayed ten days because of the clearing of the Crimean and the subsequent delayed moving of troops. However, an offensive had been launched today north of Leningrad on the Karelian Peninsula; in ten to fifteen days another offensive would be launched elsewhere; and in July the general offensive would be at its full force. The Leningrad offensive was merely the first stage. Here the Soviet armies had broken through the Finnish lines and had advanced.

*[illegible "Military" F
No copy to Embassy
EHO]*

I inquired whether there was anything the President could do vis-à-vis Finland. The Marshal replied in the negative, stating that the Finns must be beaten by force. "They are a serious, stubborn, blunt people and sense must be hammered into them." I said that the President was always glad to receive suggestions with regard to Finland. The Marshal stated that he had no new proposals. He commented on the possibility of America breaking off relations with Finland, adding that of course he would not venture to propose such a step since it might not fit in with the President's plans and might do him harm in the elections. I replied that frankly the President had given consideration to this step, that his mind was always open on the question, but that he

felt that such a step would be the last round of ammunition. I added that the present thinking in Washington was that the President could be more helpful by not breaking off relations with Finland. The Marshal agreed and stated that this was very possible. I said that if there was any concrete action the President might take which the Marshal considered would be of value, he would always be glad to receive suggestions.

Marshal Stalin said that there were no alterations in Soviet plans vis-à-vis Finland. He wanted an independent Finland. But the Finnish lines were twenty kilometers from Leningrad and must be pushed back to give security to that city. But Finnish independence must be preserved. However, the Finnish Government must be changed and the Finnish people should be encouraged to choose a new Government.

EP:nn