

June 6, 1944
**Telegram from Nikishov to Beria - Henry A.
Wallace's visit to the city of Magadan**

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Summary:

Telegram from Ivan Nikishov, to NKVD Commissar Beria. Nikishov reports on a visit by US Vice President Henry A. Wallace, who toured the Soviet Far East in May 1944. Nikishov was the Head of Dalstroï, the "Far North Construction Trust," part of the Soviet Gulag system which oversaw mining using forced labor in the Russian Far East. Nikishov quotes a number of positive comments from Wallace, as well as questions he had about Dalstroï's operations, such as the total quantity of gold mined.

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Send to:

A C O P Y

C.[omrade] Stalin

Top Secret

C.[omrade] Molotov

Copy No. 3

June 6, 1944

No. 536/b [Beria]

TELEGRAM No. 16022

June 6, 1944

From M A G A D A N

To: PEOPLE's COMMISSAR of INTERNAL AFFAIRS Comrade BERIA

In addition to my cable on WALLACE's visit to the city of Magadan and industrial cities of the Dalstroi, I report to you: During the whole period of three days and nights of his visit, WALLACE was interested mostly in the following questions [issues]:

1. During our first meeting [he] asked me if I consider it expedient to have a railroad in the territories of Chukotka and Kolyma or if it's better to use aviation. I answered that if the demand for cargo transportation and movement of people is high, aviation is not enough, and the main role will have to be carried out by railroad transportation or by trucks. It is expedient to use aviation over long distances, when it is not necessary to build a [highway] road.

2. A few times [he] asked me how many people are working in Dalstroi.

3. [He asked me] if I consider it is necessary to mine gold during the war and if the gold will be [available] after the war. I answered that if this question applies to the gold mining in Dalstroi, that in Dalstroi the gold mining is not the primary work. The main activities in Dalstroi are: building of airdromes and roads, geological reconnaissance, fishing, operation of the Kolyma River transportation, and running the Nagaev Trade Port. The Dalstroi receives orders on gold mining from the government [in Moscow], and if the government gives an order to mine gold, therefore, gold is needed. As for [the question] if there is a necessity for gold after the war, I think that gold will keep its importance and role for a long time and there is a need for it during the war, as well after the war not only in the USSR, but also in all countries.

4. Stubbornly, over two days, in various versions [Wallace] asked me the same question: "How much gold is mined in Dalsroi?" For the first time the question was posed at the Kolyma [River] in the Frunze placer mine after we had watched the removal of gold from the gold processing ore machine. [The question was:] "How much gold is produced per day in Dalstroi?" I answered that 3-4 kilograms [are taken] from this machine. After the trip to the Chai-Uriinsk Valley [he] asked me a question: "How many gold ore processing machines are there in Dalstroi?" I answered: "There are 50-60 machines in this valley." The next question was: "How much gold was produced by Dalstroii in 1943?" I answered: "Since the chemical gold refining is not carried out in the Dalstroi but it is done at the refining plant in Moscow, I don't have these data." After this the next question followed: "So, but approximately how much?" I answered to this: "7-8 percent more than in 1942." There were no other questions.

Finally, at the hotel of the airport in Seimchan, during a conversation with me and Com.[rade] GOGLIDZE, in the presence of his fellow-travelers and our comrades, [Wallace] said the following: "We heard about Dalsroi in America and knew that it is a big trust. Here, after having visited the territory of the trust Dalstroi, we made certain of this and we need to state that there are no trusts in America that involve so many various types of work and I think that Dalstroi will give more gold to the state than any other enterprise of your country." I and Com.[rade] GOGLIDZE did not answer to this [statement].

The next question, that, in my opinion, WALLACE and his fellow-travelers were interested in, was seeing a prisoner camp, but since they did not see a camp anywhere, or even a single prisoner, they were disappointed in this question.

In the morning of [May] 27, at the airdrome of Low Seichan, before the departure by plane for Yakutsk, while saying goodbye, W-ce [Wallace] shook my hand and thanked me for everything I had shown him in Dalstroi. [He said he] liked everything he had seen, as well as [he] thanked me for the warm welcome of himself and his fellow-travelers. He repeated again that "we in America know of Dalstroi, we heard a lot about it, but what I've seen personally exceeds all our concepts about Dalstroi."

To this I answered that in the Soviet Union such a big and powerful industrial organization as Dalstroi is not the only one.

To this WALLACE said the following: "I hope that after the war Dalstroi will be developed even more, and this will strengthen the friendship between the USA and Soviet Union."

On the evening of [May] 25, in the city of Magadan WALLACE and his companions and four officers, in the presence of Com.[rade] GOGLIDZE, a representative of NKID [Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissariat], head of the Special Airway General [Il'ya] SEMENOV, [and] Colonel [Il'ya] MAZURUK [a Soviet pilot] visited the Magadan House of Culture, [where they] examined an exhibition of fine arts and inventions. [Wallace] wrote in the visitor book: "This is an outstanding expression of a strong people who were the pioneers of this region. Henry WALLACE."

After examining the House of Culture, everybody attended a concert. WALLACE was pleased with the performance. WALLACE's companions and officers who accompanied him were especially impressed by the concert.

While examining the fine arts exhibition, WALLACE liked two paintings, [and] he wanted to buy them. After consulting with Com.[rade] GOGLIDZE, we decided to give them to him as a gift. WALLACE took the paintings with gratitude.

There were no other additional special occasions during WALLACE's visit to Magadan and the Dalstroi industrial sites.

No. 3525

June 3 [1944]

N i k i s h o v

Correct: [a handwritten signature]