

## **April 9, 1947**

### **Interview with Mr. Stassen and Stalin**

#### **Citation:**

"Interview with Mr. Stassen and Stalin", April 9, 1947, Wilson Center Digital Archive, I.V. Stalin, Sochineniia, vol. 16, pp. 57-67  
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/134378>

#### **Summary:**

Stassen, in his interview with Stalin, discusses ideological differences between the USSR and the US, as well as prospects for cooperation between the two countries.

#### **Original Language:**

Russian

#### **Contents:**

Translation - English

## Interview with Mr. Stassen

April 9, 1947

Stassen declares that he is grateful to I . V . Stalin for the reception. He, Stassen, asked about the reception so that he could express his respect for I.V. Stalin as a head of state. He, Stassen, finished an interesting trip to European countries, during which he was interested in the economic situation of various countries after the war. In his, Stassen's, opinion, the standard of living of peoples is greatly important for their prosperity. Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States were very important during the war and will be quite significant in the future. He, Stassen, realizes that the economic systems of the Soviet Union and the United States are different. The economy of the USSR is built on a planned, socialist basis, and the Communist Party leads its development. In the United States a free economy with private capital exists. He, Stassen, would be interested to know if Stalin thinks that these two economic systems can coexist in the same world and cooperate with one another after the war.

Stalin answers that they, of course can cooperate with one another. The difference between them has no real importance, because the heart of the matter is their cooperation. The economic systems of Germany and the USA are the same, yet nevertheless war arose between them. The economic systems of the USA and the USSR are different, but they did not fight with each other, and cooperated during wartime. If two different systems can cooperate during wartime, then why can't they cooperate during peacetime? Of course, it stands to reason that if there will be a desire to cooperate, then cooperation is entirely • possible under different economic systems. But if there is no desire to cooperate, then even under the same economic systems states and peoples can fight.

Stassen declares that, of course, a desire to cooperate has great importance, but in the past, before the war, various declarations were made in both countries about the impossibility of cooperation. Before the war, I.V. Stalin himself made a declaration concerning this. But he, Stassen, would like to know if I.V. Stalin considers that the events of the war, the defeat of the fascist axis, i.e. Germany and Japan, changed the situation and can one now hope for cooperation between the USSR and the USA if there is the desire.

Stalin answers that in no way can he assert that two different systems cannot cooperate. The first ideas about the cooperation of two different systems were expressed by Lenin, our teacher, says I . V . Stalin. We, the Soviet people, are Lenin's pupils. We never deviate and never will deviate from the instructions of Lenin. It is possible that he, I.V. Stalin, said that one system, for example the capitalist, doesn't want to cooperate, but this relates to the realm of desire to cooperate, and not to the possibility. As regards the possibilities of cooperation, he, I.V. Stalin holds the point of view of Lenin concerning the possibility of and the desire for cooperation between two economic systems. Likewise, the people and the Communist party of the U SSR have the desire to cooperate. Doubtless, such cooperation would be beneficial to both countries.

Stassen answers that this is clear. The declarations that he remembered were issued by I.V. Stalin to the XVIII Party Congress and to the 1937 Plenum. In these declarations the subject was "capitalist encirclement" and "monopolistic and imperialistic development." From the recent declarations of I.V. Stalin, he, Stassen, has come to the conclusion that now, after the defeat of Japan Germany, the situation has changed.

Stalin declares that in no congress or plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party did he, I.V. Stalin, speak, nor could he speak of the impossibility of

cooperation of the two systems. He, I.V. Stalin, said that capitalist encirclement and the danger of an attack on the USSR existed. If one side doesn't want to cooperate, then this means that there is a threat of attack. And, in reality, Germany, not wanting to cooperate with the USSR., attacked [us]. Could the USSR have cooperated with Germany? Yes, the USSR could have cooperated with Germany, but the Germans didn't want to cooperate. On the other hand, the USSR would have cooperated with Germans the same as with any other country. As you see, this relates to the sphere of desire [for], and not to the possibility of cooperation.

One must differentiate between the possibility of cooperation and the desire to cooperate. There is always the possibility to cooperate, but there isn't always a desire to [do so]. If one side doesn't want to cooperate, then the result will be conflict and war.

Stassen says that the desire must be mutual.

Stalin answers that he must prove the fact that the Russians want to cooperate.

Stassen says that he is happy to hear this, and that he would like to touch upon the Stalin's declaration that the economic systems of the USA and Germany are the same. He must say that the economic systems of the USA and Germany were different when Germany began the war.

Stalin does not agree with this and says that the [political] regimes in the USA and Germany were different, but that there was not difference in the economic systems. The regime is a temporary, political factor.

Stassen says that much has been written to the effect that the capitalist system gives birth to the evil of monopoly and imperialism, as well as oppression of the workers. In his, Stassen's opinion, in the USA they have succeeded in preventing the development of monopolistic and imperialistic tendencies of capitalism, and, moreover, the workers in the USA enjoyed a much greater right to vote than Marx and Engels could have imagined. In this lies the difference between the economic systems of the USA and the one that existed under Hitler's Germany.

Stalin says that one shouldn't be carried away with criticism of one system by another. Each people adheres to that system which it wants and can hold to. History will show which system is better. One must respect the system that has been selected and approved by the people. It is the business of the American people whether the system in the USA is good or bad. To cooperate, it isn't necessary that nations have the same system. It is necessary to respect the system that has been approved by the people. Cooperation is only possible under this condition.

As concerns Marx and Engels, they, of course, could not foresee what would take place 40 years after their deaths.

They call the Soviet system totalitarian and dictatorial, and the Soviet people call the American system monopoly capitalism. If both sides want to curse each other as monopolistic or totalitarian, then cooperation will be unsuccessful. We must proceed from the historical fact of the existence of two systems that were approved by the people. Cooperation is only possible on this basis.

As regards enthusiasm for criticism of monopoly or totalitarianism, this is propaganda. And he, I.V. Stalin, is not a propagandist, but a man of deeds. We cannot be sectarians, says I.V. Stalin. When the people want to change the system, then they will do this. When he, I.V. Stalin, met with Roosevelt and discussed military

matters, he and Roosevelt did not curse each other as monopolists or totalitarians. This considerably aided him and Roosevelt in establishing cooperation and attaining victory over the enemy.

Stassen says that this type of criticism from both sides since the end of the war is one of the reasons that misunderstanding has arisen. He, Stassen, would like to know if I. V. Stalin hopes for a wider exchange of ideas, students, teachers, artists, and tourists in the future in the event that cooperation is established between the USA and the USSR.

Stalin says that this is inescapable if there is to be cooperation. The exchange of goods leads to the exchange of people.

Stassen says that in the past misunderstanding has arisen between the USA and the USSR because the Soviet side did not want to exchange ideas; this was expressed in the introduction of censorship of the communications of foreign correspondents from Moscow. For example, the refusal of permission for the New York Herald Tribune to have their own correspondent in Moscow was one of the reasons for the lack of mutual understanding between the peoples of the USSR and the USA.

Stalin answers that, in truth, the rejection of the New York Herald Tribune correspondent's visa took place. But this was a mix-up, an accidental occurrence. It was not connected with the policy of the Soviet government. He, I.V. Stalin, knows that the New York Herald Tribune is a respectable newspaper. The fact that part of [the contingent of] American correspondents have a poor disposition towards the USSR is also important.

Stassen answers that there are indeed such correspondents. The New York Herald Tribune correspondent was granted permission to be in Moscow, but only during the session of the Council of Ministers. Now the newspaper is considering the matter of dispatching a permanent correspondent to Moscow. The New York Herald Tribune is one of the leading organs of the Republicans, who are even more important now that they have obtained a majority in Congress.

Stalin says that it is all the same, since we do not see any great difference between the Republicans and the Democrats. As regards the question of correspondents, he, I.V. Stalin, remembers a [notable] instance. In Teheran, the Big Three held a press conference at which they conducted affairs in a friendly atmosphere. One American correspondent, whose last name he, I.V. Stalin, cannot remember, sent a communication that Marshal Timoshenko attended the conference, although in fact he was not there, and that he, I.V. Stalin, struck Marshal Timoshenko during dinner. This was a crude and slanderous fabrication. So what of it? Should we praise this correspondent? Churchill, Brook, Leigh [translit. Legi], and up to 30 people, who could bear witness that nothing of the sort occurred, were at this dinner, during which the participants celebrated Churchill's sixty-ninth birthday. Nevertheless, this correspondent sent his fabricated communication to the newspaper and it was published in the US press. Can you trust such a correspondent? We, says I.V. Stalin, do not consider that the USA or its policies are to blame for this. But such incidents will occur. This creates a poor disposition on the part of the Soviet people [towards the USA].

Stassen says that, of course, there are examples of irresponsible conduct by correspondents, who send incorrect dispatches. But other correspondents correct the mistakes of these former [group], and as time passes the people know which correspondents are reliable and which aren't. As a result, we see that the people understand and unite in the names of the great military powers.

Stalin answers that this is true .

Stassen says that every time a correspondent makes an intentionally and entirely incorrect declaration, his newspaper recalls him. Thus, our newspapers create for themselves a cadre of talented and credible correspondents.

Stalin says that at first these correspondents write sensational dispatches. The newspapers publish them, make money, and then dismiss these correspondents.

Stassen says that media, trade, and cultural exchange are the spheres in which the two systems must find a way to arrange their mutual relations.

Stalin says that this is true.

Stassen declares that, in his way of thinking, if there was no censorship of the correspondents' announcements, this would be a better basis than any other for cooperation between our peoples.

Stalin says that in the USSR it would be difficult to manage without censorship. Molotov tried to do this several times, but was entirely unsuccessful. Every time that the Soviet government abolished censorship, it had to reverse this decision [lit. "repent of this] and [re] introduce [censorship] . In the fall of the year before last the Soviet government abolished censorship. He, I .V . Stalin, was on vacation and the correspondents began to write that Molotov forced Stalin to go on vacation, and then they began to write that he, Stalin, will return and drive away Molotov. Thus. these correspondents imagined the Soviet government as some sort of menagerie. Of course, the Soviet people were indignant, and censorship had to be reintroduced.

Stassen says that, as he understands now, I.V. Stalin considers that cooperation is possible if the will and desire to cooperate are present.

Stalin answers that this is entirely true.

Stassen says that electrification and mechanization are important in the matter of raising the standard of living, and utilizing atomic energy in industry is significant for all peoples, including those of the USSR and the USA. He, Stassen, considers that the business of creating a system of inspection, control, and announcing uses of atomic energy outside the law for military purposes are important for all peoples of the world. Does I.V. Stalin consider that there are prospects for working out an agreement in the future concerning the control and regulation of producing atomic energy and concerning its peaceful utilization?

Stalin answers that he hopes for this. There are major disagreements between the USSR and the USA on this question, but in the end, as he, I.V. Stalin, hopes, both sides will understand each other. In his, I .V. Stalin's, opinion, there will be institutions of international control and inspection, and this will be quite significant. The utilization of atomic energy for peaceful purposes will bring forth a great turning point in production processes. As regards utilization of atomic energy for military purposes, this, in all probability, will be forbidden. This requires the desire and conscience of the nations.

Stassen says that this is one of the most important problems. If it is solved, atomic energy will become the greatest boon for the peoples of the entire world, but if it is not [solved], it will be the greatest curse.

Stalin says that, as he thinks, they will succeed in instituting international inspection and control. The matter comes to this.

Stassen thanks I .V. Stalin for the conversation.

Stalin answers that he is at Stassen' s disposal, that Russian hold their guests in high esteem.

The rest of the conversation deals with the economic situation of Europe and the United States.

The texts ends with the following end note: "This text of I .V. Stalin's conversation with Mr. Stassen was handed to Mr. Stassen in Moscow. Moreover, the text of Mr. Stassen's pronouncements was approved by Stassen, and the text of Stalin's pronouncements was approved by Stalin. Nevertheless, a number of arbitrary changes and inaccuracies were permitted in the text' s publication in the American press."