

October 19, 1945

TASS Digest Distributed to Cde. I.V. Stalin and Cde. C.M. Molotov, 'Ecuadorian Press about a Statement Ascribed to Comrade Stalin by a New York Times Correspondent; etc.'

Citation:

"TASS Digest Distributed to Cde. I.V. Stalin and Cde. C.M. Molotov, 'Ecuadorian Press about a Statement Ascribed to Comrade Stalin by a New York Times Correspondent; etc.'", October 19, 1945, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 97, ll. 95-102. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/134702>

Summary:

Articles on the Yalta Conference, Foreign Minister Molotov's influence in the Soviet Union, and Stalin's alleged illness.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

25 October 1945

return.

[stamp: Secret Department of TASS]

Top Secret

ECUADORIAN PRESS ABOUT A STATEMENT ASCRIBED TO COMRADE STALIN BY A NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT

NEW YORK, 19 October (TASS). According to a report of the United Press agency from Quito (Ecuador) the Ecuadorian newspapers El Comercio, El Dia, and La Patria criticized a statement ascribed to Stalin by New York Times correspondent Catledge in editorials. Catledge asserts that at the Berlin conference Stalin asked a question, do his Anglo-American colleagues want Ecuador and Albania to also take part in the development of the terms of the peace treaty with Germany and Italy and to participate in the voting on this question. The newspaper El Comercio points out, "It is quite strange that a political leader speaks of our republic with contempt, showing a misunderstanding unworthy of that position which he holds, and especially a misunderstanding of the democratic principles for which the war which ruined half the world was conducted".

The newspaper "El Dia" writes, "We do not understand why small and weak countries should be placed on the last rung of a ladder invented by a Soviet marshal to illustrate the contrast with the superpower position occupied by his country and other countries".

The conservative newspaper "La Patria" writes, "No one is morally or economically empowered to infringe of the dignity of any other country".

In the article printed in the newspaper The New York Times on 7 October, trying to express the assumption that the Soviet Union desires the three small powers "to dictate the peace terms", Catledge asserts that at the Conference in Yalta Stalin stressed this condition, "asking the question to Roosevelt and Churchill, do they desire Albania and Ecuador to also have a vote in the development of the terms of the peace treaty with Germany and Italy[?]".

(According to the assertion of the report received from Quito, Catledge mentioned the Conference in Yalta, not the Conference in Berlin).

[handwritten: return[ed] 29 October]

Top Secret

ARTICLE OF KARL EVANG ABOUT COMRADE MOLOTOV

OSLO, 19 October (TASS). Karl Evang, the Director of the Department of Medicine, published a big article today in the newspaper Arbeiderbladet entitled "Molotov".

Evang writes, "Molotov enjoys quite great authority both in his own country as well as in the whole freedom-loving world generally. In the USSR the people regard him with extraordinary trust and great love, but in the rest of the world they look at him with deference and respect. The general impression I created from discussions with foreign journalists and in Russian circles comes down to the fact that Molotov is sort of the second citizen of the Soviet Union after Stalin. The reasons for this ought to be sought not in his official position, but rather in the fact that he has gradually won

himself great authority. However, many think that he shares second place with Kalinin.

During a visit to Moscow (7 - 12 November 1944) by Minister of Foreign Affairs Trygve Lie, former Minister of Justice Terje Wold, Press Attaché Schive, and myself in the first weeks after the liberation of the Russian part of Finnmark, I managed to see Molotov up close for the first time. Previously I had seen him only on screens, in photographs, and I had developed the idea of him as a short person, pale, much less impressive than his predecessor Litvinov.

This impression turned out to be completely false. Molotov belongs to the type of influential person who also shows part of those qualities in appearance which distinguish him from the average person. He has very clear, intelligent, possibly somewhat cold, eyes. He wears a pince-nez, which he does not remove even at meetings, always wears a neat, civilian suit or is dressed in the uniform of the Russian foreign department.

During the time of our stay in Moscow the Norwegian delegation twice had breakfast with him and a number of officials of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Before the first breakfast some foreign journalists told me that Molotov was quite dry and not very sociable. Therefore I waited for the formal breakfast, which has a purely official nature. But something completely different happened. The personality of Molotov dominated. He was cheerful; it was clear that he felt good in the company which had gathered. He knew the names of the Norwegian guests by heart and pronounced in Russian, by convention, a toast to each guest separately, pronouncing the names with great clarity and absolutely correctly.

Russians at that time were very interested in the position which Western powers would take with regard to the war crimes and the peace terms which would be presented to Germany after it was beaten. Some fear was felt that the Western powers would be too soft in their dealings with Germany and the war crimes.

Maisky, also present at the breakfast, touched on questions from this sphere and caused debates. Minister of Justice Wold expressed his point of view and also his opinion of how to deal with war crimes. Maisky finally said, joking: "Don't be too kind, Mr. Wold". This concerned the 10 Norwegian fascists. The Russians found out that Knut Hamsun, a writer admired in Russia, is unfortunately being included among the fascists and therefore would be punished. Both Molotov and Maisky thought that it was necessary to exhibit some share of magnanimity in such cases. They said, as an example, that in spite of the fact that the great Russian artist Repin was an inveterate opponent of the Russian Revolution. Russia nevertheless recognized its great son.

Molotov spoke only Russian. Interpreter Pavlov, who interpreted into English, sat around him. Several times Molotov mentioned the good-neighborly relations between Russia and Norway which had reigned for centuries. For hundreds of years a great and a small power had a common border without a single serious conflict. This relationship, he said, could directly serve as a good example for others. Molotov also expressed his delight at the contribution of the Norwegian people in the fight against the enemy. The fact that Molotov had held such a good reception for the Norwegian delegation in Moscow showed the desire of the Russian side to display especially great attention to it.

Molotov headed the Russian delegation to San Francisco. At the conference he was the representative of the great sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, whose place on the map of the world no one could yet determine. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Molotov managed to gradually attract stronger attention to himself than anyone else, both of all the conference as well as of all world public opinion.

The reason for his complex situation at the conference was not only that he represented a great power standing as an equal with the other greatest powers, but also his ability, consistency, and outstanding ability to maneuver. He gave color to the debates forthrightly and courageously with brief, sparingly composed Russian proposals, even in the large plenary meetings. This was not the usual veiled diplomatic language. These were direct, clear utterances which you so rarely hear at conferences of this type.

As ought to be expected from a person holding such a central place in the new Russia, Molotov has long years of productive work in the history of the Russian Revolution behind him. (Then a detailed biography of Molotov is given).

Accordingly, the firm position of Molotov in his own country and great trust in him from his people cannot be ascribed to just his remarkable personality as People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs. It is also rooted in his many years of work in the revolutionary movement. For the public opinion of the US, Britain, and other freedom-loving countries Molotov is a representative of a new, strong Soviet Union, demanding an equal position among the greatest powers of the world".

FABRICATIONS ABOUT AN ILLNESS OF COMRADE STALIN HAVE BEEN REFUTED IN PARIS

LONDON, 19 October (TASS). The Reuters agency reports from Paris, "As far as we know, Marshal Stalin is absolutely healthy", declared officials in the Soviet Embassy in Paris on 19 October, when they were asked to comment on information about the Marshal's health circulated in the city.

"For the past 10 months we have been asked 15 times to confirm reports about the death of Stalin", these officials added.

It has become known in Paris that in secret telegrams coming to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs there is nothing that would indicate any basis for concern in connection with Stalin's health.

Three copied printed

1 - to Cde. I. V. Stalin

2 - to Cde V. M. Molotov

[handwritten: N 393-394ss PR]

[return] 22 October

[stamp: Secret Department
of TASS]

Top Secret

RUMORS IN THE FOREIGN PRESS ABOUT THE STATE OF HEALTH OF COMRADE STALIN

NEW YORK, 19 October (TASS). American newspapers and magazines, which interpret freedom of the press as the right to release irresponsible rumors, have recently published reported that Stalin is ill and will possibly soon retire. Some of these rumors have been accompanied by assumptions about the existence of a rivalry between the leadership of the Communist Party and the Red Army.

Last week the magazine Time, repeating recent rumors coming from a French journalist [Delvar] (from the newspaper Paris Press), asserted that some American officials who were present at the Berlin Conference declared that Stalin "quickly grows tired and his health is far from good", at a time as when, in the words of other American representatives, Stalin is lively and energetic. This week the magazine Time, commenting on Stalin's vacation, asserted that rumors are being strongly spread that Stalin's health is very bad".

However, the magazine Newsweek (which partly belongs to American Ambassador in Moscow Harriman) gives even more far-fetched views. Last week this magazine asserted that "Stalin's health is bad. According to available information during the Berlin Conference he had two small heart attacks and he also suffers from a liver ailment. The uncertainty in Stalin's health influences the domestic policy of Russia unfavorably. In the opinion of some informed people this explains Molotov's behavior at the talks in London. Evidently, Molotov is afraid to agree with anything since he fears that this might put him in an unfavorable position when various groups in Russia fight for power if Stalin retires or dies".

This week the magazine Newsweek declared that reports about the allegedly poor health of Stalin have been circulating privately, just like similar rumors about Roosevelt before the presidential elections last year. However, as the magazine notes in statements which are being made publicly, it tells of the opposite. The magazine refers to a report from Vienna in which it says that Ambassador Harriman expressed confidence that Stalin is healthy. The magazine also reports that in reply to a question of the Stockholm correspondent of the magazine Newsweek Finnish Minister of Education Helo, who recently returned from Moscow, scoffed at the suggestion that Stalin was ill. This correspondent asserted that Stalin's state of health has especially great importance in connection with the recent worsening of Soviet-American relations. Diplomats often consider Stalin "the bridge between the East and West, a person with whose aid they can dispel the suspicions of the Russians and avert Russian isolationism". Stalin pursued a policy of cooperation with the West in wartime. It is unpleasant for diplomats to even think about the possibility of dealing with his successor".

On 17 October Harsch, a correspondent of the newspaper Christian Science Monitor, published a similar article in which he stated that officials connected with Soviet-American relations are expressing regret in connection with rumors about the health of Stalin. As he maintained, Stalin's vacation has aroused numerous rumors that he is sick which, as might be expected, might cause serious tension inside the country". In Harsch's words, in spite of such rumors, there is no evidence that Stalin is ill. According to available information, "Stalin was in good form" during the conference in Potsdam and later, during the interview with Pepper. Hence the State Department draws the conclusion that rumors about an illness of Stalin are based only on the fact that he has taken a vacation, which does not arouse surprise, considering the intensive work of Stalin during the war. Regarding deliberations about possible internal friction, Harsch declares that the Russians well remember the difficulties which arose from the conflict with the Trotskyites and understand that a repetition of an internal conflict would considerably undermine the prestige and might of the Soviet Union. Then Harsch writes that rumors about an illness of Stalin are being intentionally fanned since Stalin has shown that he is "the most moderate and understanding Russian leader". As Harsch maintains, for several years the Americans have observed that it is much simpler to deal with Stalin than with Soviet officials subordinate to him. Americans connected with Soviet-American relations think "that their problems would be complicated, and not simplified, if something forces Stalin to leave the leadership. Stalin is a skillful, shrewd person in disputes, but he found out much about other countries in a number of wartime conferences. He makes decisions and sticks to them. He is also distinguished by openness".

Some, usually well-informed Washington correspondents maintain that British

diplomatic circles are fanning the rumors about the supposed illness of Stalin.

Three copies printed

1 - to Cde. I. V. Stalin

2 - to Cde. V. M. Molotov

3 - to the S. O. [Secret Department] file

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