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*The president muses on Stalin, atomic weapons, and peace.*

#### **July 16, 1945**

At 3:30 p.m. Mr. Secretary Byrnes, Admiral (5-star) Leahy and I left in an open car for Berlin, followed by my two aides and various and sundry secret service and military guards, and preceded by a two-star general in a closed car with a couple of plain-clothes men to fool 'em if they wanted to do any target practice of consequence on the president. They didn't.

We reviewed the Second Armored Division and tied a citation on the guidon of Company E, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion. General Collier, who seemed to know his stuff, put us in a reconnaissance car built with side seats and no top, just like a hoodlum wagon minus the top on a fire truck, with seats and no hose, and we drove slowly down a mile and a half of good soldiers and some millions of dollars' worth of equipment -- which had amply paid its way to Berlin.

Then we went on to Berlin and saw absolute ruin. Hitler's folly. He overreached himself by trying to take in too much territory. He had no morals and his people backed him up. Never did I see a more sorrowful sight, nor witness retribution to the nth degree.

The most sorrowful part of the situation is the deluded Hitlerian populace. Of course Russians have kidnapped the able-bodied and I suppose have made involuntary workmen of them. They have also looted every house left standing and have sent the loot to Russia. But Hitler did the same thing to them.

It is the Golden Rule in reverse -- and it is not an uplifting sight. What a pity that the human animal is not able to put his moral thinking into practice. We saw old men, old women, young women, children from tots to teens carrying packs, pushing carts, pulling carts, evidently ejected by the conquerors and carrying what they could of their belongings to nowhere in particular.

I thought of Carthage, Baalbek, Jerusalem, Rome, Atlantis, Peking, Babylon, Nineveh, Scipio, Ramses II, Titus, Herman, Sherman, Genghis Khan, Alexander, Darius the Great -- but Hitler only destroyed Stalingrad -- and Berlin. I hope for some sort of peace, but I fear that machines are ahead of morals by some centuries and when morals catch up perhaps there'll be no reason for any of it.

I hope not. But we are only termites on a planet and maybe when we bore too deeply into the planet there'll be a reckoning. Who knows?

#### **July 17, 1945**

Just spent a couple of hours with Stalin. Joe Davies called on Maisky and made the date last night for noon today. Promptly at a few minutes before twelve I looked up from my desk and there

stood Stalin in the doorway. I got to my feet and advanced to meet him. He put out his hand and smiled. I did the same, we shook, I greeted Molotov and the interpreter and we sat down.

After the usual polite remarks we got down to business. I told Stalin that I am no diplomat but usually said yes and no to questions after hearing all the arguments. It pleased him. I asked him if he had the agenda for the meeting. He said he had and that he had some more questions to present. I told him to fire away. He did and it is dynamite -- but I have some dynamite too, which I am not exploding now. He wants to fire Franco, to which I wouldn't object and divide up the Italian colonies and other mandates, some no doubt that the British have. Then he got on the Chinese situation told us what agreements had been reached and what was in abeyance. Most of the big points are settled. He'll be in the Jap war on August 15. Fini Japs when that comes about.

We had lunch, talked socially, put on a real show, drinking toasts to everyone. Then had pictures made in the backyard.

I can deal with Stalin. He is honest, but smart as hell.

### July 18, 1945

Ate breakfast with nephew Harry, a sergeant in the field artillery. He is a good soldier and a nice boy. They took him off *Queen Elizabeth* at Glasgow and flew him here. Sending him home Friday. Went to lunch with P.M. at 1:30, walked around to British headquarters. Met at the gate by Mr. Churchill. Guards of honor drawn up. Fine body of men -- Scottish Guards. Band played "Star-Spangled Banner." Inspected guard and went in for lunch. P.M. and I ate alone. Discussed Manhattan (it is a success). Decided to tell Stalin about it. Stalin had told P.M. of telegram from Jap emperor asking for peace. Stalin also read his answer to me. It was satisfactory. Believe Japs will fold up before Russia comes in. I am sure they will when Manhattan appears over their homeland. I shall inform Stalin about it at an opportune time.

Stalin's luncheon was a most satisfactory meeting. I invited him to come to the U.S. Told him I'd send the battleship *Missouri* for him if he'd come. He said he wanted to cooperate with the U.S. in peace as we had cooperated in war, but it would be harder. Said he was grossly misunderstood in the U.S. and I was misunderstood in Russia. I told him that we each could help to remedy that situation in our home countries and that I intended to do my part at home. He gave me a most cordial smile and said he would do as much in Russia.

We then went to the conference and it was my job to present the ministers' proposed agenda. There were three proposals, and I banged them through in short order, much to the surprise of Mr. Churchill. Stalin was very much pleased. Churchill was too, after he had recovered. I'm not going to stay around this terrible place all summer just to listen to speeches. I'll go home to the Senate for that.

### July 25, 1945

We met at 11:00 a.m. today. That is, Stalin, Churchill and the U.S. president. But I had a most important session with Lord Mountbatten and General Marshall before that. We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley era, after Noah and his fabulous ark. Anyway, we think we have found the way to cause a disintegration of the atom. An experiment in the New Mexico desert was startling - - to put it mildly. Thirteen pounds of the explosive caused a crater six hundred feet deep and twelve hundred feet in diameter, knocked over a steel tower a half mile away, and knocked men down ten thousand yards away. The explosion was visible for more than two hundred miles and audible for forty miles and more.

This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10. I have told the secretary of

war, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital or the new. He and I are in accord. The target will be a purely military one and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I'm sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance. It is certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler's crowd or Stalin's did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful.

Sources: Harry S. Truman Library, Papers of Harry S. Truman. Diary, July 17, box 333, president's secretary's files; diary, July 16, "Ross, Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. (handwritten)" box 322, president's secretary's files.



ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR THIS  
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