

November 3, 1945

**From the Journal of V.M. Molotov, 'The Reception of
US Ambassador Harriman at 2330 3 November 1945'**

Citation:

"From the Journal of V.M. Molotov, 'The Reception of US Ambassador Harriman at 2330 3 November 1945'", November 3, 1945, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 98, ll. 0030-0039. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/208876>

Summary:

Responding to questions posed by Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov at an earlier meeting, American Ambassador W. Averell Harriman attempts to explain several finer points on the structure and function of the Far East Commission and Allied Military Council in Japan.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

SECRET

FROM THE JOURNAL
OF V. M. MOLOTOV

THE RECEPTION OF US AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN
at 2330 3 November 1945

Harriman expressed the hope that he had performed his task in striving to give explanations to Molotov, having received from his government replies to all the questions raised by Molotov in the preceding conversation. In any event, said Harriman, he thinks that he has the answers to these questions.

Molotov expressed readiness to hear out Harriman.

Harriman said that there were three questions with respect to the document about the control mechanism for Japan. The first was a question about the location of the Allied Military Council. As Harriman suspected in the previous conversation the location of this Council will be Tokyo. As regards the question that the word "control" was not used in the text of the proposal about the control mechanism for Japan the US government is ready to satisfy the wish stated by Molotov and is ready to insert the word "control" in the last phrase of point 1 of the proposal about the control mechanism, after the word "occupation". Thus, point 1 of this proposal will read:

"1. An Allied Control Council will be instituted under the chairmanship of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (or his deputy) for the purpose of consultation with the Supreme Commander and giving him advice with respect to the implementation of the surrender terms, the occupation, and the control of Japan, and also with respect to additional directives relating to them".

By way of clarification Molotov asked, should control be exercised over the fulfillment of the surrender terms and the occupation of Japan [?]. What will be controlled?

Harriman replied that Japan will be controlled, and again cited § 1 of the proposal with the entered word "control".

Molotov asked, wouldn't it be better to write, "exercise control over the fulfillment of the surrender terms and the occupation of Japan [?].

Harriman explained that the control functions in Japan will be exercised by the Supreme Commander, who will consult with the Council.

Molotov asked, will the control relate to the observance of the surrender terms and the occupation [?]

Harriman replied that this means the implementation of the surrender terms and of the occupation and control of Japan. At the same time Harriman, with a connotation of some irritation, stressed that he correctly explained the meaning of the English text of this proposal and again repeats point 1 about the control mechanism.

Molotov asks, will the Military Council control the implementation of the surrender terms and the occupation of Japan [?]

Harriman again repeats that the Supreme Commander will perform the control

functions in consultation with the Council and again reads the text of § 1. In other words, said Harriman, the Supreme Commander will control the implementation of the surrender terms and the occupation of Japan, consulting and getting advice from the Military Council.

Molotov asked, does it mean that control of the observance of surrender terms and the occupation will be done by the Supreme Commander, who will consult and confer with the Military Council [?]

Harriman replied affirmatively, and adds that the word "control" is included in the text in accordance with the wishes expressed by Molotov, and again stressed that, when implementing the surrender terms and the occupation, the Supreme Commander thereby also controls Japan, and that control over Japan is also implied in the initial text of the proposals about the control mechanism, but the word "control" is added to introduce more clarity to this proposal.

Molotov asked, while exercising control over Japan would the Supreme Commander confer or coordinate his actions with the Council members [?]

Harriman replied that the Supreme Commander will only consult with the Council members.

Molotov took note of this statement of Harriman's and asked [him] to continue the clarifications.

Harriman said that in the last conversation Molotov raised the question, will the members of the Military Council consult with their governments [?]. This question arose in connection with the discussion of point 3 of the proposals about the control mechanism.

Molotov said that the question was raised by him somewhat differently. It is completely clear and indisputable that members of the Council will consult with their governments. He, Molotov, had in mind cases of the existence of differences between the Supreme Commander and Council members on questions of principle; how will the Supreme Commander act in this event [?].

Harriman said that, of course, members of the Commission can consult with their governments, but the decision of the Supreme Commander will be final in this event. Then Harriman added that the working conditions of the Military Council do not exclude the possibility of the discussion of questions between governments relating to the formulation of policy, but the actions of the Supreme Commander should not be tied by this discussion, that is, his hands should not be tied by the expectation of the outcome of the discussion. Of course, continued Harriman, talks will take place between the governments on questions which arise, and everything will be done to achieve complete agreement. But the US government thinks that in the event that urgent questions arise the final decisions on them will be made by the Supreme Commander. In giving such explanations, said Harriman, he wants to present the position of his government on this question more clearly.

Molotov explains that he meant non-urgent questions of principle.

Harriman declared that, of course, such questions will be discussed between the governments, but in urgent situations the Supreme Commander makes the final decision himself. Harriman said that it is unpleasant for him to stress that differences can occur, but in the event of differences the Supreme Commander makes the final decision himself. Of course, these questions will be discussed if time allows, but in

urgent situations, when the situation requires immediate action, the Supreme Commander makes the final decision himself. Harriman specified that the question of the urgency of a specific problem will be decided by the Supreme Commander.

Molotov asked, ought it be understood that consultations will take place between the governments on questions of a non-urgent nature which cause differences in the Council [?]

Harriman replied that the creation of the Allied Military Council does not preclude consultations between the governments, and that the US government is ready to consult with the governments of the USSR, Britain, and China, but that the right of final decision for all urgent questions rests with the Supreme Commander.

Molotov asked, is it assumed to use the principle of coordination in the work between the Supreme Commander and members of the Military Council on questions of principle as is for example, envisioned by the provision about the work of the Allied Control Commissions in Hungary and Romania?

Harriman replied in the negative and declared that the last word remains with the Supreme Commander, who acts according to the directives of his government. Harriman said that Molotov is suggesting that the control mechanism in Japan operate on the example of the Allied control bodies in Hungary and Romania. But then the Soviet Government did not agree with making changes in the provision about the control bodies in these countries.

Molotov explained that the proposal of the Soviet Government about a new provision for the Control Commissions [SIC] for Hungary were passed to the Allies and asked whether Harriman knew this.

Harriman replied that he was familiar with the fact that such proposals were presented by the Soviet Government in Potsdam. Then Harriman added that all these comments of his were made by him in connection with the mention of Hungary but, as it concerns the question under discussion about the Military Council for Japan then he, Harriman, has already laid out the position of the American side.

Molotov said that he had read the record of the conversation between Generalissimo Stalin and Harriman in Sochi, and Generalissimo Stalin had also referred to the example of Hungary and Romania during the discussion of the question about a control mechanism for Japan and expressed a wish about also employing the same principles with respect to Japan.

Harriman, interrupting Molotov, said that according to the report he had, Voroshilov had made an independent decision regarding the Hungarian Army without coordinating this question with the remaining members of the Allied Control Commission.

Molotov replied that possibly in individual cases contentious questions will also occur in the practice of work, but the principles of coordination lay at the basis of the regulation about the control body in Hungary.

Replying to Molotov's words about Cde. Stalin's conversation with Harriman, Harriman declared that Generalissimo Stalin agreed that the Supreme Commander in the Allied Control Council for Japan has the last word when deciding questions.

Molotov explained that in this case he meant the role of the Supreme Commander as chairman of the Military Council, but that in the conversation with Harriman

Generalissimo Stalin was speaking about the actions of the Allied Control bodies in Hungary and Romania, where the principle of coordination of directives with allied representatives was taken as a basis.

Harriman said that this is correct, but Generalissimo Stalin agreed with the idea that the last word remains with the Supreme Commander in the Allied Control Council in Japan.

Molotov said that Generalissimo Stalin meant that in the Allied Control Council in Japan the US representative is the Chairman of the Council and as Chairman he acts accordingly, but Generalissimo Stalin also had in mind the principle of coordination for this Council, which is the basis of the activity of the Allied control bodies in Hungary and Romania.

Harriman said that the work of the Military Council in Japan under the chairmanship of the Supreme Commander differs from the activity of the Allied Control Commissions in Hungary and Romania since in the system of allied bodies for Japan it provides for the institution of a Far East Commission which will decide political questions. Therefore the structure of the Allied body for Japan is unlike the structure of the Allied bodies for Hungary and Romania.

Molotov said that he meant not the structure of these bodies, but one of the principles of the work of the Allied Council in Japan. This has great importance for the creation of the Council and, of course, it is important on what principle the work of this body will be based. In this sense Generalissimo Stalin also cited the example of Hungary as acceptable to the Soviet Government.

Harriman declared again in response to this that at the same time Generalissimo Stalin said that the Supreme Commander has the last word.

Molotov said that it ensues from the entire conversation of Generalissimo Stalin that the principle of coordination is at the basis.

Harriman said that in a conversation with Harriman Generalissimo Stalin said that the Soviet High Commissioner in Romania and Hungary has the last word. It was not mentioned at this time that the principle of coordination should be employed with respect to the work of the Allied Control Council in Japan.

Molotov asked Harriman, was he familiar with the text of the new regulation about the work of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary presented in Potsdam [?]

Harriman replied in the affirmative, that he had read this document and again repeated that in a conversation with him Generalissimo Stalin agreed to the creation of the Allied body in Japan on the basis of the principle that the Supreme Commander has the last word.

Molotov said that this is natural in the event of especially urgent questions, but on questions of principle of a non-urgent nature it is advisable to act on the basis of the principle of coordination.

Harriman declared that the US government thinks that the presence of special difficulties there ought to be taken into consideration with respect to Japan, and that is why the Supreme Commander should have freedom of action to make urgent decisions.

Molotov said that he understands that Harriman had urgent cases in mind.

Harriman, interrupting Molotov, declared that he was speaking about questions requiring taking action, that is, questions which were urgent or capable of becoming urgent, and that he, Harriman, is not empowered to hold talks and discuss this problem, but he has been charged with only giving an explanation on questions of interest to Molotov.

Molotov said that during the conversation between Generalissimo Stalin and Harriman in Sochi [they] spoke about the creation of a control commission, or a control council, and asked why the Allied body for Japan is named a Military Council [?]

Harriman replied that the Allied Control Council in Japan is not a control body, for the Supreme Commander exercises control authority, consulting and advising with members of the Military Council.

Harriman said that the US government was not satisfied when the Soviet High Commissioner in Hungary and Romania made decisions and issued orders in the name of the Allied Control Commission with which the US government did not agree. But in this case the US proposals about a control mechanism for Japan are not analogous to the situation about the control mechanism for Hungary and Romania, for there is a difference between the structure of these bodies in Hungary and Romania, on the one hand, and Japan, on the other, since in this case there is the Far East Commission, which also formulates policy. The functions of the Council, explained Harriman, are executive, but Far East Commission formulates policy. The main thing in the activity of the Supreme Commander and the Military Council will be carrying out the directives of the Far East Commission and the implementation of its decisions. The directives which the Supreme Commander will receive will be developed by another body, that is, the Far East Commission. thus, the entire structure of the Allied bodies for Japan differs from the structure of the Allied bodies in Romania.

Molotov said that of course there is a difference here, but the Soviet Government has one question in mind, will the principle of coordination in the work of the Allied Council for Japan be in effect [?]

Harriman, replying in the negative, declared that this principle is not being envisioned. The coordination of questions will be performed by the Far East Commission, and a function of a Military Council is the implementation by the Supreme Commander of the directives of the Far East Commission, which in the process will consult with the members of the Military Council. The Military Council will operate only according to the directives of the Far East Commission. The work in Japan will be done on the basis of and in accordance with the directives originating in the Far East Commission.

Molotov said that he understood Harriman's explanations.

Harriman then switched to a presentation of his replies and explanations about the question of the Far East Commission, tentatively addressing Molotov with the question, that, if Molotov wished, he, Harriman, was ready to pass Molotov all his changes and explanations in written form, stressing when so doing that all these changes were made on the basis of Molotov's wishes.

Molotov expressed agreement to receive these changes in written form.

Harriman then switched to an explanation of point C in section II of the functions of the Far East Commission, mentioning that in a past conversation Molotov expressed a wish to clarify the following phrase in this point:

"The Commission will adopt a policy already presented by the government of the United States as obligatory if and until it is changed by the Commission, and also will consider directives as obligatory which the United States has already sent the Supreme Commander, if and until the authorities which issued the instructions change such directives in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission".

Harriman said that the complete set of documents about the policy of the United States, and of the directives already issued by the US government are being sent to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington. Then Harriman said that, if the Soviet side wishes, the US government is ready to meet [it] halfway and change the wording of this point. It says in the initial text of this point that the Commission will accept a policy already presented by the government of the United States as obligatory. The newly changed text reads as follows:

"The Supreme Commander will continue to act in accordance with those directives if and until they are changed by the Commission".

This was done, explained Harriman, so that the term, "as obligatory" is not employed, and this ought to be understood in the sense that a policy presented by the government of the United States is not obligatory for members of the Allied Military Council.

Then Harriman tried in a quite muddled way to explain the wording of point 1 (A) of section II about the functions of the Far East Commission

"...The formulation of the policy, principles, and norms required for the complete implementation of the act of surrender, both on the part of Japan and between the participating governments".

Harriman declared that if this point and in particular the words "between the participating governments" are not clear, then the Americans are ready to change the wording of this point, which was proposed by the British and accepted by the Americans without change. After muddled and inarticulate explanations Harriman declared that his government had not given him any new explanations to what he had already presented in a past conversation by way of personal assumptions. At the conclusion of these interpretations of his Harriman declared that he himself did not understand this point, said jokingly that the more he tried to explain it the less he understood it, and that this question will be discussed in detail in the Commission itself.

Here Harriman expressed confidence that he had given exhaustive explanations on all the other questions. Then he declared that he also had explanations about the question of the principle of voting in the Far East Commission.

Molotov said that that [they] ought to abandon the principle of voting of the four when deciding questions by the Far East Commission.

Harriman asked, was Molotov proposing a principle of unanimity of the four when voting in this Commission and declared that he was not authorized to hold discussions on this question.

Molotov explained that the employment of this principle would be better for the work

of the Commission.

Harriman retorted: "Perhaps it would interfere in the work of the Commission".

Molotov replied, "No matter, the governments will help".

Harriman, not presenting the explanation he promised about the voting principle, said that this was all he had to report. Then he asked forgiveness and switched to checking the text of his letter, which he then presented to Molotov. When presenting the letter, Harriman expressed the hope that this letter would help Molotov more precisely understand what he, Harriman, had presented in the conversation, and also all the proposals, and expressed confidence in so doing that all questions had been covered in the conversation and his letter.

Molotov expressed gratitude for the information and explanations, and expressed the hope that in a day he would be able to meet with Harriman, that is, the day after tomorrow, after he reported to the government the results of today's conversation, and also the proposals and explanations of Harriman.

The conversation lasted one hour and 15 minutes.

Cde. Malik was present at the conversation.

Recorded by Potrubach

Distributed [to]

Cdes. Stalin

Beria

Malenkov and

Mikoyan

1343M

5 November

2-ks