

September 23, 1944

Establishment of a Tripartite Military Committee in Moscow

Citation:

"Establishment of a Tripartite Military Committee in Moscow", September 23, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Container 174, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/220005>

Summary:

Harriman, Kerr, and Stalin discuss the development of a tripartite military committee.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

THE AMBASSADOR

TOP SECRET

September 23, 1944

Conversation.

Present: The American Ambassador, Mr. Harriman
Mr. Edward Page, Second Secretary of
Embassy

The British Ambassador, Sir Archibald
Clark Kerr
Major A. H. Birse, Second Secretary of
Embassy

Marshal I. V. Stalin
Mr. V. M. Molotov, People's Commissar
for Foreign Affairs
Mr. Pavlov, Soviet interpreter

Subject: Establishment of a Tripartite Military
Committee in Moscow.

I informed Marshal Stalin that the next matter I wished to discuss was a question we had taken up last June, namely, the question of setting up a method by which the Command on the Eastern Front could be in closer touch with the Command in the West, now that Russian and Allied armies were converging on Germany. I said that the Chiefs of Staff proposed that there be established in Moscow a tripartite military committee for consultation on strategical and tactical matters of mutual interest in the European war. Marshal Stalin remarked that General Marshal had raised that question. I replied in the affirmative and stated that it was proposed that on such a committee there be representatives of the United States and United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff and a high officer of the Red Army. I made it clear that the committee was of a consultative character without powers of decision, that matters of mutual interest be considered therein, and that there be exchanged military information and plans. Marshal Stalin remarked that it would not be convenient to call the body in question a committee -- it would be better for it to have a different title. A committee, as distinguished from a commission, makes decisions. I stated that any title Marshal Stalin so desired would of course be agreeable to us -- the most important thing was to set up the machinery in question. Marshal Stalin stated that during the Tehran conference reference had been made to a coordinating committee; what was now under discussion seemed to be more in the nature of a consultative committee. I in-

mil-G-1
EHC

-2-

quired whether the Marshal had any other views in mind. The present matter was a proposal of the Chiefs of Staff. He replied that it would have been of course preferable to have had a coordinating committee in the past but developments had proceeded so rapidly and the situation appeared to be so clear, it now seemed too late to have a committee of this nature. Perhaps it would be more advisable to set up an organ or body whose main purpose would be the mutual exchange of military information. He indicated that it would be quite agreeable to establish a body of this kind and inquired who would be the members of it. I stated that General Deane, who was formerly secretary of the Chiefs of Staff, would be the American member. Marshal Stalin indicated complete satisfaction with such an appointment.

The British Ambassador stated that General Burrows would be the British member. Marshal Stalin said: "The Soviet military people are reluctant to deal with General Burrows. It is apparent that General Burrows has no respect for the Russian military and this feeling is vice versa." The British Ambassador did his best to defend General Burrows. He assured the Marshal that the General had the highest respect for the Red Army and the Red Army Staff and that he (Clark Kerr) was under the impression that General Burrows and Marshal Vassielevsky regarded each other with the highest personal esteem. Marshal Stalin commented at some length on past relationships between General Burrows and Marshal Vassielevsky and said that it was the opinion of Marshal Vassielevsky and other senior officers of the Red Army that General Burrows considered them "savages". They had no confidence in him. He was entirely too arrogant. For this reason collaboration with General Burrows was impossible. The British Ambassador said that he was very sorry to hear that this feeling in the body of the Red Army existed, and especially so since he knew that General Burrows had the highest admiration for the officers and men of the Red Army and did not consider them "savages". However, if this feeling existed it would of course be better to replace General Burrows. He would immediately report the matter to his Government and would recommend that as the British member of the tripartite committee another representative be found. Marshal Stalin stated that in such an eventuality he felt sure that everything would proceed smoothly and that mutual confidence would then be established.

I informed Marshal Stalin that for convenience's sake I would leave with him a memorandum regarding the tripartite group. The British Ambassador left with the Marshal a similar statement.

EP:nn

Copy to General Deane.

THE AMBASSADOR
TOP SECRET

Conversation. □□□□□□□□ September 23, 1944.

Present: The American Ambassador, Mr. Harriman

□ Mr. Edward Page, Second Secretary of Embassy

□ The British Ambassador, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr

□ Major A. H. Birse, Second Secretary of Embassy

□ Marshal I. V. Stalin

□ Mr. V. M. Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs

□ Mr. Pavlov, Soviet interpreter

Subject: Establishment of a Tripartite Military Committee in Moscow.

□I informed Marshal Stalin that the next matter I wished to discuss was a question we had taken up last June, namely, the question of setting up a method by which the Command in the West, now that Russian and Allied armies were converging [sic] on Germany. I said that the Chiefs of Staff proposed that there be established in Moscow a tripartite military committee for consultation on strategical [sic] and tactical matters of mutual interest in the European war. Marshal Stalin remarked that General Marshal [sic] had raised that question. I replied in the affirmative and stated that it was proposed that on such a committee there be representatives of the United States and United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff and a high officer of the Red Army. I made it clear that the committee was of a consultative character without powers of decision, that matters of mutual interest be considered therein, and that there be exchanged military information and plans. Marshal Stalin remarked that it would not be convenient to call the body in question a committee -it would be better for it to have a different title. A committee, as distinguished from a commission, makes decisions. I stated that any title Marshal Stalin so desired would of course be agreeable to us -the most important thing was to set up the machinery in question. Marshal Stalin stated that during the Tehran conference reference had been made to a coordinating committee; what was now under discussion seemed to be more in the nature of a consultative committee. I inquired whether the Marshal had any other views in mind. The present matter was a proposal of the Chiefs of Staff. He replied that it would have been of course preferable to have had a coordinating committee in the past but developments had proceeded so rapidly and the situation appeared to be so clear, it now seemed too late to have a committee of this nature. Perhaps it would be more advisable to set up an organ or body whose main purpose would be the mutual exchange of military information. He indicated that it would be quite agreeable to establish a body of this kind and inquired who would be the members of it. I stated that General Deane, who was formerly secretary of the Chiefs of Staff, would be the American member. Marshal Stalin indicated complete satisfaction with such an appointment.

□The British Ambassador stated that General Burrows would be the British member. Marshal Stalin said: "The Soviet Military people are reluctant to deal with General Burrows. It is apparent that General Burrows has no respect for the Russian military and this feeling is vice versa." The British Ambassador did his best to defend General Burrows. He assured the Marshal that the General had the highest respect for the Red Army and the Red Army Staff and that he (Clark Kerr) was under the impression that General Burrows and Marshal Vassielevsky regarded each other with the highest personal esteem. Marshal Stalin commented at some length on past relationships

between General Burrows and Marshal Vassielevsky and said that it was the opinion of Marshal Vassielevsky and other senior officers of the Red Army that General Burrows considered them "savages". They had no confidence in him. He was entirely too arrogant. For this reason collaboration with General Burrows was impossible. The British Ambassador said he was very sorry to hear that this feeling in the body of the Red Army existed, and especially so since he knew that General Burrows had the highest admiration for the officers and men of the Red Army and did not consider them "savages". However, if this feeling existed it would of course be better to replace General Burrows. He would immediately report the matter to his Government and would recommend that as the British member of the tripartite committee another representative be found. Marshal Stalin stated that in such an eventuality he felt sure that everything would proceed smoothly and that mutual confidence would then be established.

□I informed Marshal Stalin that for convenience's sake I would leave with him a memorandum regarding the tripartite group. The British Ambassador left with the Marshal a similar statement.

EP:nn

Copy to General Deane.