

November 12, 1945

**From the Journal of V.M. Molotov, 'The Reception of
US Ambassador Harriman at 1900 12 November
1945'**

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Summary:

Molotov and Harriman argue, respectively, for the Soviet and American proposals for a control mechanism and Far East Commission in Japan, failing to iron out differences between the two proposals.

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Russian

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SECRET

FROM THE JOURNAL
OF V. M. MOLOTOV

THE RECEPTION OF US AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN

at 1900 12 November 1945

Molotov stated that he would like to pass the reply of the Soviet Government to the 9 November US government note. Molotov presented Harriman with the written text of the reply of the Soviet Government, the official text in Russian (attached) and an unofficial translation in English.

Familiarizing himself with the text, Harriman expressed a desire to receive an explanation about whether the Far East Commission was intentionally called "Consultative" in this document.

Molotov replied that for now the name of the Commission has not been finally established and therefore in the reply of the Soviet Government it is called the Far East Consultative Commission, as it was named in the first proposal of the American government.

Harriman replied that the US government proposed naming it the Far East Commission, and not the Far East Consultative Commission.

Molotov explained that the Soviet Government will not object to this.

Harriman pointed out that, as Molotov knows, the Far East Commission is created as a body formulating policy, and not as a body presenting recommendations to the governments of the Allied powers, as was proposed in the initial draft of the creation of the Far East Consultative Commission.

Molotov replied that the Soviet Government has no objections on this question if agreement is reached on all the main questions.

Harriman said that, comparing the telegrams received from his government and reading the reply of the Soviet Government, he sees that this reply does not coincide with the point of view of the American government. As a result of a cursory familiarization with the Soviet note he, Harriman, has created the impression that in the Soviet reply more importance is being attached to the body being created under the Supreme Commander in Japan than the Far East Commission, to which the American government gives greater importance than the body under the Supreme Commander. Besides the four main Allies other countries having a substantial interest in questions concerning Japan also take part in the Far East Commission.

Molotov explained that in the reply of the Soviet Government it speaks of both bodies, both about the body which will be created on-site in Japan, as well as about that body which will function outside Japan, in Washington. In the opinion of the Soviet Government both these bodies have great importance.

Directing attention to the fact that in the reply of the Soviet Government it says that in the period of the disarmament of the Japanese armed forces the Supreme Commander acted without any control and an Allied control body, Harriman

explained that after the creation of a Far East Commission MacArthur and the control body instituted under him in Tokyo would have to act in accordance with the policy formulated by the Far East Commission, which would be subject to the detailed consideration of all questions about Japan. At this point Harriman also pointed out that the functions of the Far East Commission are not analogous to the functions of the European Consultative Commission.

Molotov explained that the reply about the importance of the Far East Commission is given in § 2 of this note of the Soviet Government. A reply is also given here to Harriman's question, how does the Soviet Government view the question of the rights of the Supreme Commander[?]. The rights and authority of the Supreme Commander when making decisions on a majority of decisions are clearly stressed in the Soviet note. However, there are several questions on which agreement should be reached beforehand between the Supreme Commander and the members of the Allied control body in Japan. This means such questions of principle as, for example, a change of the mode of control in Japan, a change of the composition of the Japanese government, etc.

Harriman pointed out that the US government notified the Soviet Government that comprehensive and complete consultation will be conducted on all such questions between the US government, the Soviet government, and the other Allied governments. However, this should not impede the Supreme Commander from making decisions and issuing orders before agreement is reached between the governments. He ought to have the right to act both until a decision is made in the Far East Commission as well as in such cases when agreement is not reached between the governments on questions requiring the adoption of urgent measures. The US government should also have the right to make final decisions on such questions and the right to issue directives about them to their Supreme Commander, about which nothing is mentioned in the Soviet Government reply.

Molotov replied that the Soviet Government cannot concern itself about relations between the American government and its Supreme Commander. In the Soviet Government's reply, Molotov explained further, it spoke of questions of principle which are of interest to the Soviet Union as one of the Allied countries taking part in deciding questions affecting Japan. The question of relations between the American government and the Supreme Commander of the American armed forces in Japan is the business of the American government itself.

Harriman said that the US government desires to have the right to give directives to the Supreme Commander about any questions requiring an urgent decision until a decision is made on these questions in the Far East Commission, just as until coordination of these questions between the Allied governments. Harriman added that the US government will exert every effort to not allow and to avoid differences with the Allies.

Harriman noted that in the document presented to him by Molotov nothing was said about the right of the Supreme Commander to make final decisions before consultation with Allied representatives or in the event of differences with them. Consequently, a situation can be created when the Supreme Commander will be hindered in making decisions on urgent questions. In other words, said Harriman, three governments might impose their will on the American government.

Molotov denied such a situation and explained that in the reply of the Soviet Government it speaks only about some questions of principle concerning which coordination between the Supreme Commander and members of the Allied control body in Japan is necessary. On all remaining questions, which are the majority, the Supreme Commander will have the right to act independently as the Chairman of the Allied control body. This is only about a limited number of questions requiring

agreement between the Allies; on all remaining questions the Supreme Commander can act independently.

Harriman asked, who should make the final decision when there are differences on a particular question. If the US government won't have the right to make final decisions then a hopeless situation might be created, a dead end. The proposed situation of coordination of action is like the situation adopted in Germany. However, the American government cannot agree with such a system. In Germany there is a High Commissioner in each zone of occupation who makes final decisions in the event of differences. The US government agreed with the functions of the Soviet High Commissioner in the Balkans, where the Soviet High Commissioner retains the right of a final decision. The US government agreed to such a right of the Soviet High Commissioner. In case of the necessity of adopting urgent and effective measures with respect to Japan the US Government and the Supreme Commander will not be in a position to act quickly and effectively when several weeks are required for the discussions with the Allies to reach agreement.

Molotov replied that only some number of questions on which agreement between the Supreme Commander and representatives of the Allied powers is required was meant, and that the Soviet Government thinks that the Allies will be able to come to agreement on these questions just as they have come to agreement on all questions of principle up to now. Then Molotov explained that in the last, fifth, paragraph of the reply of the Soviet Government the goals which the Soviet changes pursue are briefly explained in order that the participation of the Soviet Union in the control body in Japan does not have a decorative nature. Then Molotov asked Harriman, does Harriman's mention and reference to the situation of the Allied control bodies in Romania and Hungary mean that the American side desires that MacArthur's rights in Japan be the same as the rights of the Soviet High Commissioner in Romania and Hungary or not [?]

Harriman avoided answering this question, referring to the fact that he was not empowered to discuss this question, and again repeated that the situation in Japan is different than the situation in Romania and Hungary, for there is a Far East Commission in the diagram of Allied bodies for Japan, which is absent in Romania and Hungary.

Molotov pointed out that the Soviet Government took this difference into consideration and recognized the priority position of the US in Japanese affairs. However, in taking part in exercising control over Japan the Soviet Union also has a right to bear its share of responsibility for this, and not to participate decoratively.

Harriman declared that the Government of the United States considers the question of whether it, the Government of the United States, can give directives to MacArthur and make final decisions in case of urgent necessity on all questions until the discussion of these questions in the Far East Commission, and in case of differences between the Allies on these questions, a basic question of principle. This question was not touched upon in the reply of the Soviet Government at a time as the American government considered it a basic question of principle.

Molotov replied that the Soviet Government gave a reply to this question in points 2 and 5 of the note he presented to Harriman.. In point 5 it says that the Soviet Government does not intend to impair the priority rights of the US in Japanese affairs, and from the content of point 2 it is clear that the Supreme Commander has the final word in a majority of cases. However, the Soviet Government cannot agree that the Supreme Commander makes the final decisions on all questions without exception.

Harriman explained that in the note of the American government it says that all questions of principle should be subject to comprehensive discussion by the Far East

Commission. This stands to reason. However, the US Government also proposed that in the event of the necessity to make urgent decisions the US Government had the right to give orders to the Supreme Commander until the Commission makes decisions, and also in the event that differences arise between the Allies on these questions. Then Harriman again pointed out that all questions of principle will be passed to the Far East Commission for discussion.

Molotov replied that he understood Harriman's statement of which questions will be passed to the Far East Commission for discussion, but the Far East Commission will draft directives, and the control body on the scene, in Japan, will put these directives into effect. How these directives will be put into effect in practice, this question has great importance and, especially, the question of the practical implementation of the directives on all the main questions of principle. The Soviet Government attaches great importance not only to the question of drafting the directives, but especially to how these directives will be carried out on the scene, in Japan.

Harriman said that the US Government insists on its right to give directives to the Supreme Commander before the Far East Commission makes a decision and also in the event of a difference between the Allies on a particular question.

Molotov explained that on point 2 of the reply of the Soviet Government the rights of both the US Government as well as the American Supreme Commander in Japan are interpreted sufficiently broadly. The only reservation, by way of an exception, is several questions on which it is important to have an understanding and agreement among the Allies.

In reply, Harriman asked Molotov, whether Voroshilov had consulted with his Allied colleagues on the question of the formation of the new government in Hungary.

Molotov replied a new government in Hungary has not yet been formed.

Harriman explained that he raised the question not for the purpose of criticism, but because he had received a report about the dissolution of the previous Hungarian government.

Molotov replied that he had received a telegram just today from Voroshilov that a new government in Hungary has not yet been formed.

Harriman said that according to information he had received agreement had been reached about the formation of a new Hungarian government between Voroshilov and the leaders of the political parties.

Molotov denied this, and said that the leaders of the political parties cannot yet come to agreement among themselves.

Harriman declared that the US Government cannot agree to restrictions of its rights and the rights of the American Supreme Commander in Japan proposed by the Soviet Government, for they cannot be accepted in view of the present of the special difficulties and dangers of the situation in Japan. He said, the US Government sincerely desired to collaborate and reach agreement with the Allies, but it cannot agree to have any difficulties for itself in the adoption of decisions and actions. The practice employed by the Allies in Germany cannot be employed in Japan.

Molotov replied that the Soviet Government did not propose the use of this practice with respect to Japan and that the Soviet Government recognizes the priority position of the United States in Japanese matters.

Harriman replied that possibly Molotov has his, Molotov's, own interpretation of this question.

Molotov replied that the interpretation of this question is clearly presented in points 2 and 5 of the reply of the Soviet Government.

Harriman asked that consequently the question of the appointment to any post in the Japanese government ought to be coordinated with all the Allies.

Molotov explained that this means changes in the Japanese government, but that he, Molotov, thinks from the experience in other countries that the Allies will have an opportunity to come to agreement about such questions of principle.

Harriman replied that partial changes of the Japanese government are also possible.

Molotov replied that there will be reasonable people in the Allied control body in Japan who will be able to come to agreement in time about the necessary changes in the Japanese government.

Harriman again talked about the unacceptability for the US of the method of coordinating actions about such questions between the Supreme Commander and members of the Allied body in Japan, and that the US Government cannot agree that its hands be tied when deciding these questions. The US Government has gone far and proposed a method of preliminary consultation which is not being employed in the Allied control bodies in the Balkans.

Molotov expressed disagreement with such an assertion by Harriman and talked about the method of preliminary consultation in the Allied control bodies in the Balkans.

Harriman again repeated that the American side sincerely desired and was striving to cooperation with the Allies in the implementation of the surrender terms by Japan and that these attempts and desires are not decorative, but sincere. However, the situation in Japan is full of dangers and difficulties, and therefore the US should also have the right of a deciding voice for adopting final decisions.

Molotov pointed out the baselessness of the assertions of the American government that it will be paralyzed in the event in the event of a recognition of the need to adopt concerted decisions between the main Allies on questions of principle with respect to Japan. It was shown in the explanations given by the Soviet Government that the Soviet Government does not intend to impair the priority rights of the US in Japanese matters.

Harriman said that it is possible that the Soviet Government does not have such intentions, but in the event the Japanese government acts incorrectly then the agreement of the three main powers - the USSR, Britain, and China - will be needed to take steps to quickly correct such incorrect acts by the Japanese government, and consequently, the US Government will be deprived of the opportunity to undertake the necessary urgent actions.

Molotov said that such fears of Harriman's are unfounded.

Harriman expressed the fear that in such cases no less than three weeks will be needed for discussions and achievement of an agreement between the Allies.

Molotov explained that for a majority of questions the Supreme Commander can make a decision himself.

Harriman said that nevertheless the Supreme Commander will not be able, for example, to independently change the composition of the Japanese government.

Molotov replied in the affirmative and said that the question of a change of the composition of the Japanese government is a question which should be coordinated with the Allies; however, such questions as a change of the composition of the Japanese government will of course not arise often.

Harriman agreed that such questions will not arise often, but declared that in the event of the necessity of adopting decisions on urgent questions the Supreme Commander will be restrained by the need to coordinate these decisions with the Allies.

Molotov asked, in such an event for what is the Soviet representative, and also the representatives of the other Allied countries in the control body in Japan being invited if the Soviet representative in this case will not have the right and opportunity to responsibly participate in the solution of such questions [?].

Harriman replied that the American draft of the provision about the operation of the Allied control body in Tokyo provides that the Soviet representative, just like the representatives of the other Allied countries, will have the right of consultation and giving advice to the Supreme Commander. In addition, the Soviet representative will take part in the work of the Far East Commission, where they will also consult and confer with him, but the Supreme Commander and the US Government should have the right to act and make decisions before the outcome of the discussions, for otherwise it will turn out that if the Soviet, Chinese, and British representatives do not agree with a particular decision on some question the American government will not be able to make a decision or act. A hopeless situation might be created, a dead end.

Molotov replied that there are not so many questions on which the agreement and accord between the Allies will be required, and the governments of the Allied powers will be able to come to agreement about them.

Harriman asked, "But if not, if they do not come to agreement, then what?"

Molotov replied that questions on which it is impossible to come to agreement are hard to imagine, for agreement can be reached on all questions.

Harriman said that consequently the three Allied powers will be granted the right of a veto with respect to the decisions and actions of the US Government and the Supreme Commander.

Molotov replied that the Allied powers agreed that decisions in the Security Council should be made unanimously by the five main Allies. The Allies also operated on this same principle in the European Consultative Commission, and were able to achieve agreement on all questions. Accordingly, agreements can also be reached on questions relating to Japan.

Harriman agreed with this in principle, but again declared that the Supreme Commander should have the right to act at his own discretion, and assured Molotov that the US Government will not agree with the proposal of the Soviet Government about restricting the rights of the Supreme Commander. Promising to pass the reply of the Soviet Government to the US Government, Harriman declared that he should

note that the American government thinks that it bears chief responsibility for the situation in Japan and attaches greater importance to this principle, that is, the US government's and the Supreme Commander's right to the final decision. The US Government also exerts and will exert every effort to achieve agreement with the Allies on contentious questions, but it is against making decisions capable of complicating the situation.

Molotov replied that the Soviet Government also does not wish to make decisions which could complicate the situation.

Harriman said that there are American troops in Japan, that the US bears responsibility for all the matters and events occurring in Japan, and that Generalissimo Stalin also agreed with this situation.

Molotov replied that the point of view of Generalissimo Stalin on this question was clearly presented in the reply of the Soviet Government.

Harriman replied that it is possible that he, Harriman, and the US Government have incorrectly interpreted the point of view of Generalissimo Stalin.

Molotov replied that the reply of the Soviet Government has a detailed explanation on this question and that in a majority of cases and in a majority of questions the Supreme Commander, as Chairman of the Allied control body in Japan, will have the last word.

Harriman said that, speaking of the last word of the Supreme Commander, Generalissimo Stalin did not qualify this in any way, and that he, Harriman, understood this in the sense that the American Supreme Commander, having at his disposition the occupation forces and commanding them, bears complete responsibility in Japan and has the right to make final decisions.

Of course, said Harriman, the Soviet Government can leave Japan if it does not like some of the decisions or actions, but the United States cannot leave Japan. The responsibility of the United States for deciding Japanese matters obligates the United States to have the final word in deciding questions relating to Japan.

Molotov explained that the Soviet Government recognized the priority position of the US in its reply but Generalissimo Stalin never agreed that the Supreme Commander had the right of a final decision on absolutely all questions without exception. There are several exceptions when the preliminary coordination of decisions of the Allies about Japan is required. This ensues from the fact of the participation of the Soviet Government in control over Japan. Otherwise the role and participation of the Soviet Union in the control body in Japan would come down to purely decorative participation.

Harriman said that the Government of the United States has no intention of attaching just a decorative nature to the participation of the Soviet Union in control over Japan. Harriman promised to immediately send the reply of the Soviet Government to his government, but declared that the US Government reply to this Soviet note will be the same in its content as the replies and explanations of Harriman given by him in today's conversation.

Molotov said that the note he presented to Harriman today is the reply of the Soviet Government to the American proposals, and stressed that the Soviet Government recognized the priority position of the US in Japan.

Concluding the conversation, Harriman said that he very much regrets that the reply of the Soviet Government does not coincide with the point of view of the US Government.

The conversation ended with this. Bidding farewell, Harriman informed Molotov about the arrival of Ethridge from Bulgaria and asked Molotov when he, Molotov, would be able to receive Ethridge, who desired to tell Molotov what he had seen in Bulgaria.

Molotov promised to inform Harriman when he would be able to receive Ethridge.

The conversation lasted one hour and five minutes.

Cde. Malik was present at the conversation

Recorded by Potrubach

Distributed to:

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