

**November 1, 1945**

**From the Journal of V.M. Molotov, 'The Reception of  
US Ambassador Harriman, 1 November 1945 at  
1930'**

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**Summary:**

Notes on a 1945 conversation between Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov and United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averell Harriman on the American-led Far East Commission and Military Council in Japan.

**Credits:**

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Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Secret  
FROM THE JOURNAL  
OF V. M. MOLOTOV

#### THE RECEPTION OF US AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN

1 November 1945 at 1930

[Translator's note: In accordance with English-language diplomatic usage the Russian word, *glavnokomanduyushchiy*, used here is translated as "Supreme Commander" when referring to MacArthur in Japan and as "High Commissioner" when referring to the analogous position in Europe]

Molotov said that he has some questions with regard to the documents about Japan delivered by Harriman. Molotov said, the first question regards the document about the control mechanism for Japan. Where will this body be [?]. The document says nothing about this.

Harriman replied that it is actually not noted in the document but, although he also does not have any instructions about this question, nevertheless he takes the responsibility for declaring that the location of the control mechanism will be Tokyo. Harriman added that he will nevertheless ask his government.

Molotov said that his second question regards the Far East Commission. What countries will be members of this Commission and where will it be [?].

Harriman replied that the Commission should decide the question of its location itself. According to the initial plan it was to have met in Washington, but cases were not excluded when it might also would be convened in other places. There were no objections to moving the Commission from Washington to Tokyo, but the question arose of whether it might be located anywhere. As Molotov probably remembers, said Harriman, in a letter to Byrnes Bevin wrote that it would be desirable to select Tokyo as the location of the Commission. Byrnes replied that the American side has no objections to this. If the Soviet side has any suggestions about this question then he, Harriman, is ready to hear them. As regards the countries taking part in the conference, Harriman said that initially the invited countries and also India, which had already been invited at the request of the British, were considered members of the Commission meeting in Washington right now. Then right here Harriman drew up a list of countries invited to take part in the Far East Commission and passed it to Molotov. The list included the following 11 countries: the USSR, Great Britain, China, the United States, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Canada, and India.

Molotov said that the goal of today's conversation is the clarification of some questions which came to his mind when examining the documents delivered by Harriman and therefore he, Molotov, is limiting himself only to raising questions requiring explanation and elaboration.

Harriman expressed readiness to give all the necessary explanations, as far as possible.

Molotov said that the next question he wanted to ask Harriman was about the control mechanism. It does not say in the text of the document that the Allied Military Council will exercise control functions, although it bears the name of a control mechanism. If the document is given another title, then the impression might be created that the document is a draft of a creation of a body only for consultation between the Supreme Commander and the representatives of the USSR, China, and Great Britain.

Harriman replied that the body envisioned by the document is a control mechanism, although the Supreme Commander, being Chairman of the Council, has the final decision, but the body itself has consultative functions. Paragraph three, said Harriman, provided for consultation between the Supreme Commander and members of the Council and the receipt of advice from them about orders and directives on questions of principle before they are issued.

Molotov said that Harriman knows that the Soviet Government favors the Chairman of the Council being Supreme Commander, the American representative. He, Molotov, wants to know what functions the Military Council will perform and just why it is called a Military Council. What exactly is the meaning given to this Council called "Military"?

Harriman replied that the main task of the Military Council will be consultation between the Supreme Commander and the representatives of the three countries, but in the case of disagreement the right to make final decisions and issue orders and directives rests with MacArthur, for which he himself bears the responsibility. The body is called a Military Council because it will consist of military representatives.

The US Government envisioned the institution of the Military Council as a body to implement the terms of the surrender and occupation of Japan, unlike the Far East Commission, whose mission will be to formulate policy on these questions.

Molotov said that in Germany, for example, the Allied body is not called a Military Council and that not one of the Allied bodies in the other defeated countries has such a name.

Harriman said that he does not think that this name has any special significance. As he pictures it, the Supreme Commander issues orders and gives corresponding instructions under his responsibility, although these orders are also issued with the agreement of the Council, and when agreement cannot be reached on some question then the Supreme Commander takes the responsibility for the decision on this question on himself. Then these directives and instructions are issued not in the name of the Council, but in the name of the Supreme Commander. Harriman explained that there were such cases in Romania when the orders and directives with which the Americans did not agree were issued not in the name of the Control Commission but in the name of the High Commissioner. Harriman said that he does not want by this to stress the fact of an obligatory existence of a difference in opinions but, on the contrary, he was confident and hoped that complete agreement will be reached in the Council for Japan and that MacArthur will be given instructions that he fully coordinate his action with the governments of the Allied powers in the Council and inform them of the orders and directives he is issuing beforehand. The Military Council is the control mechanism, but it is clear that the Supreme Commander has the final decision.

Molotov took note of Harriman's statement and said that it did not say in the document that the Military Council will deal with control and if the title of this document is changed, then it is not evident that it is a control mechanism.

Harriman again repeated that this body is the control mechanism in which the Supreme Commander bears the responsibility for the directives and instructions issued by him, and added that in connection with Molotov's comment he would ask Washington about the lack of any mention of the Council's control functions in the text. Harriman said, this body is sort of a union (combination) of the Supreme Commander and the representatives of the Allies.

Molotov asks why the body is called the Allied Control Council. It is not clear whether this body deals only with military questions, or it can also decide political questions.

Harriman said that he is not empowered to change the name of this body and promised to ask his government about this question. If Molotov has any suggestions, then he, Harriman, is ready to hear them.

Molotov replied that he is not making any suggestions at the present time, but only asking that clarity be brought on some points of the documents. In this case he would like to know whether it is better for the body being established to be given another name.

Harriman states that, in drawing up this document, the government of the United States provided that the Council be established with the purpose of consultation with the Supreme Commander and giving him advice with regard to the implementation of the surrender terms and the occupation for Japan, and also with respect to additional directives.

Molotov asked what relationships will exist between the Allied Military Council and the Far East Commission.

Harriman replied that the Far East Commission will be the body for the formulation of the policy, principles, and norms needed to implement the surrender. This body will be political, not military. The US Government will prepare directives and send them to MacArthur, who will carry out these directives in consultation with the Military Council, on the basis of the policy formulated by the Far East Commission. In other words, the Commission will formulate the overall policy which MacArthur should implement in Japan. The Military Council, as the body carrying out directives based on the decisions of the Commission, will have to interpret the policy worked out by the Far East Commission, and put it into practice. It will consult and meet with the Supreme Commander about the implementation of the surrender terms and the occupation of Japan, and about directives of both a military and political nature. All MacArthur's decisions will be adopted in consultation with the Council members. The Commission formulates policy. Then this policy will be implemented by the Supreme Commander in consultation with the Council. The Commission, for example, might decide to root out all military organizations in Japan and permit the activity of democratic parties, but the final decision about the question of what parties are to be considered democratic and which are to be considered undemocratic and which to root out and which to leave is decided by the Supreme Commander after consultation with the Council. The Supreme Commander might, for example, receive a directive to destroy all military factories, but during the implementation and clarification of the possibility of carrying out this directive - whether to destroy all or to leave part of the enterprises for the production of consumer goods - MacArthur decides this.

Also, he makes the final decision on the question of determining the fitness of a particular member of the Japanese government, just as of the functioning of the Japanese government itself, and also about political and economic questions. The functions of the Council will include the clarification of all such questions; however, the Supreme Commander makes the final decision after consultation with the Council.

Molotov asked, it follows that the purpose of the Military Council is the interpretation of the decisions of the Far East Commission.

Harriman replied in the affirmative and said that the Military Council will act in accordance with the policy formulated by the Far East Commission and will deal with all questions in Japan, both military and political. The Supreme Commander will consult with the Council when preparing decisions and orders. The Council, for example, will elaborate the question of the composition of the government in Japan. It will ascertain which candidates are acceptable for inclusion in the government and which need to be rejected. Harriman said, the directives will be drawn up by the Far East Commission in general form and they should be interpreted. The Military Council,

where the necessary decisions and directives will be coordinated, will perform this task.

Molotov clarified, did he understand correctly that the Military Council will act in accordance with the policy worked out by the Far East Commission [?]

Harriman replied in the affirmative.

Molotov clarified, that the Military Council accordingly will consider not only military, but also political questions.

Harriman replied in the affirmative, that the Military Council will implement the decisions and directives on all questions connected with control in Japan.

Molotov asked, how should the Military Council act if the directives on particular political questions are not received from the Far East Commission in a timely manner[?]. Can the Military Council make decisions on political questions independently[?]

Harriman said that he hopes that the Far East Commission will act quickly so that the Council receives the necessary directives in a timely manner. Harriman thinks that it was not envisioned that the Council will be a body for formulating policy, but will be a body for interpreting and implementing political decisions reached by the Far East Commission.

Molotov asked, ought it not be considered that according to the draft that the opinion of the Council in the question of interpreting the directives received not be obligatory for the Supreme Commander[?]

Harriman referred to the example of Germany in the sense that the directives there were given quite broadly, but the Council takes the situation into consideration in their application.

Molotov asked, how will questions of principle be decided[?] Can they be decided in the Military Council[?] Should the Supreme Commander coordinate orders on questions of principle with the Military Council[?]

Harriman replied, that during the implementation of the directives received by the Supreme Commander the latter will consult with the Council. The US intends to always have agreement with its allies, but in the event of differences the US decisions will be final. The Supreme Commander should consult with the Council about questions of principle beforehand if it is not necessary to make urgent decisions.

Molotov asked, how will things be with the discussion of non-urgent questions of principle in the Council [?] If the Supreme Commander does not agree with the Council's opinion will it be provided that the question is handed over for consultation between the governments [?]

Harriman said that he does not know how the Supreme Commander will act if he does not agree with the opinion of the Council [or] whether he will inform his own government. He, Harriman, cannot answer this question and has to ask Washington. At the same time Harriman stressed again that the US intends to always have agreement with its allies, but in the event of differences the US decisions will be final. In conclusion, he expressed confidence that all questions will be discussed in a timely manner.

Taking note of Harriman's statement, Molotov said that agreement was reached in Berlin in July about granting certain rights to the control commission in Hungary. Ought not some of the points provided in these July regulations be applied to this document [?] For example, it says there that the chairman of the commission ought to coordinate his directives with commission members.

Harriman promised to ask his government about this question.

Molotov took note of Harriman's promise and asked what caused the change of the provision about the functions of the Far East Commission which were presented in the American document of 22 August of this year. It said there that the Commission will bear responsibility for submitting the recommendations of the participating governments. This statement is not in the new wording.

Harriman replied that it was previously thought that there would be a Commission for giving recommendations to the governments, but now it is thought that this will be a Commission for the actions of their governments through this Commission to formulate their policy with respect to Japan through consultation among themselves. Now this body will be a body formulating policy, and not a consultative body, and governments will formulate their policy through their representatives in the body.

Molotov asked, what does phrase of point A(1) of the document about the Far East Commission mean when it says that the functions of the Commission consist of "formulating the policy of the principles and norms required to fully implement the document about the surrender, both on the part of Japan and also between the participating governments". Molotov asked what does "between the participating governments" mean[?]

Harriman replied that presumably, in his personal opinion, here a solution between the Allies is provided of such questions as, for example, the trade of Allied countries with Japan, the question of Japanese investments abroad, and also the question of Japan's obligations to individual countries and their fulfillment. However he, Harriman, does not imagine this point exactly and will ask for clarifications from his government.

Taking note of Harriman's promise, Molotov said that, as he remembers, Harriman said that the sentence about the voting procedure in the Far East Commission is to decide by a majority of votes, including three votes of the four main allied powers coming from the British. But couldn't two votes of the four allied powers be sufficient? [Translator's note: this paragraph is highlighted in the left margin].

Harriman said that the sentence about such a voting procedure actually came from the British. This sentence satisfies the American side and causes no objections, although he, Harriman, does not plan to personally defend this sentence and he would not object himself to decisions being made by a majority of votes, including in this majority the votes of the representatives of two of the four main powers. However, he himself would prefer a simple majority on condition that the US is in the majority.

Molotov replied to Harriman that it also seems to him personally that one can agree with the personal opinion of Harriman about two votes of the four main powers in the majority, but he stressed that this question has not yet been discussed by him even with colleagues from the NKID. [Translator's note: this paragraph is highlighted in the left margin].

Molotov said that he has a question about point C of the draft about the Far East Commission. It says there that the Commission "will adopt, as obligatory, the policy

already presented by the government of the United States', and will also adopt as obligatory "the directives which the United States has already sent the Supreme Commander". Molotov asked, what policy and what directives [?]

Harriman replied that part of the documents relating to this question were sent to the Soviet side, and part of them were published in the press. As regards the remaining documents, Harriman will ask Washington so that all the documents of interest to the Soviet side are sent to the Soviet government.

Molotov thanked Harriman for the promise and asks what "existing control mechanism in Japan" with which the Commission ought to reckon is meant in the document.

Harriman said that here it means MacArthur's staff, which should put into effect the instructions which he has received from the government of the United States, and that MacArthur has already issued a number of orders which need to be considered. Harriman also explained that the Far East Commission cannot directly give instructions to MacArthur. All instructions ought to be sent via the government of the United States.

Molotov asked what "occupation armed forces" are meant in the document which was submitted [?]. As Harriman probably knows, previously the question was raised about the introduction of some number of troops of other Allied countries into Tokyo. Does this mean that these troops of other countries in Japan, in the event they are introduced there, will also be under MacArthur's command [?]

Harriman evasively referred to the fact that the question of the participation of the troops of other Allied countries in the occupation of Japan was not discussed and that in this case his government means only the American occupation forces, but if the troops of other countries will be in Japan, then it means that they should be under MacArthur's command.

Molotov clarified, that it means the concept of "region of the command of the Supreme Commander".

Harriman replied that it means the zone of command encompassing the four main Japanese islands.

Molotov, summing up in conclusion, asked Harriman to clarify and specify the following three [SIC] questions relating to the control mechanism: 1) where will the Allied Military Council be, in Tokyo or in some other place [?]; 2) shouldn't it be mentioned somewhere in the document that the Council performs the functions of a control body with respect to Japan [?].

Harriman, interrupting, answered that, of course, he will ask his government, but again repeated that, as far as he understands, the Council is the control mechanism, a union (combination) of the Supreme Commander and the Council for the purpose of implementing the surrender terms in Japan.

Molotov took note of Harriman's statement and asked to also clarify the question of whether it was impossible to use some points of the Regulations of the Allied Control Commission [SKK] in Hungary in the document about the Far East Commission where, for example, it says that "the directives of the SKK on questions of principle are given to the Hungarian authorities by the Chairman of the Allied Control Commission after coordination of these directives with the British and American representatives". Ought it not say that there should be coordination between the Supreme Commander

and the Council members on questions of principle [?]

Harriman declared that this is the main question, and he thinks that the Supreme Commander has the final decision and that supposedly in a conversation in Sochi Generalissimo Stalin gave his definite agreement on this question. In reply to Molotov's repeated question about the possibility of employing a formula analogous to that which was adopted with respect to Hungary, Harriman objected, declaring that the situation is different in Hungary than in Japan. In Japan MacArthur has the final decision.

Molotov asked, how will the situation be with respect to non-urgent questions of principle [?] Will the Supreme Commander make the final decision on them in the event there are differences with the members of the Allied Military Council on these non-urgent questions of principle, or will such questions be passed for decision through consultation between the governments [?]

Harriman said that MacArthur will consult with Council members on all questions before making the necessary decisions. However, there might be urgent and pressing cases, for example, the need to arrest one of the war criminals in the event he emerges and is still in Japan, or the question of the resignation [otstavka] or replacement of members of the Japanese government, and others. The majority of questions of principle should be settled in the Far East Commission, but the Allied Military Council should be the body for putting the policy outlined by the Far East Commission into practical effect.

Molotov made a comment that the question of the replacement of a government is a big question of principle which ought to be solved in agreement of the Council members.

Harriman said that he can assure Molotov that the US will not act without the agreement of the Allies. For clarity, Harriman promised to ask his government.

In conclusion Molotov thanked Harriman for the explanations about the questions he had raised.

Cde. Malik was present at the conversation.

The conversation lasted one hour and 30 minutes.

Recorded by Potrubach.

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