

September 4, 1947

Letter, V.M. Molotov to George C. Marshall

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Summary:

Molotov blames the Americans for the failure of the US-Soviet Joint Commission on Korea and rejects the latest proposals put forth by Robert A. Lovett.

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Transcript - English

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The Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs (Molotov) to the Secretary of State^[1]

[Translation]

Dear Mr. Marshall: In acknowledging receipt of Mr. Lovett's letter of August 26, 1947, I consider it necessary to draw to your attention that the preliminary elaboration of measures to assist the formation of a provisional Korean democratic government, in accordance with the decision of the Moscow Conference of the three Ministers for Foreign Affairs, is to be carried out by the Joint Commission consisting of representatives of the Soviet Command in northern Korea and of the United States Command in southern Korea. For the consideration of the four Governments, including the British and Chinese Governments, according to the Moscow decision, there should be submitted the recommendations worked out by the Joint Commission prior to adoption of a final decision. Furthermore, the Governments of Great Britain and China will take part, together with the Governments of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., in the consideration of the proposals worked out by the Joint Soviet-American Commission concerning measures for helping and assisting (trusteeship) the political, economic, and social progress of the Korean people, the development of democratic self-government, and the establishment of the national independence of Korea, in order to work out an agreement concerning a four-power trusteeship with relation to Korea.

The task of the Joint Soviet-American Commission, as is known, is to render assistance in the formation of a single provisional democratic government for all Korea.

The Joint Commission has still, in fact, done little in this direction, but this situation is primarily the result of the position adopted by the American delegation on the question of consultation of the Commission with Korean democratic parties and social organizations, as was pointed out in my last letter to you. If the American delegation had shown the necessary desire to render assistance in the creation of a really democratic government in Korea, the work of the Joint Commission would have been more successful, the task laid upon it would have been fulfilled, and there would not be that stagnant situation in the work of the Joint Commission which in Mr. Lovett's letter is called an impasse.

As you know, the Soviet delegation, wishing to resolve the situation which had been created in the Joint Commission and seeking to expedite the work of creating a provisional Korean democratic government, agreed with the proposal of the American delegation not to carry on oral consultations with Korean democratic parties and social organizations, and on August 26, 1947 introduced a new proposal for the establishment of a consultative organ—the provisional general Korean peoples' assembly of representatives of democratic parties and social organizations of all Korea. This proposal in our opinion should meet no objection on the part of the American delegation in as much as it might remove the difficulties which the Joint Commission has encountered.

I consider it necessary to add to the above that the successful realization of the measure set forth in the proposal of the Soviet delegation is possible only on the basis of free and unfettered activity of the democratic parties and organizations, representatives of which at the present time in southern Korea are subjected to arrests and other repressions, which is incompatible with the principles of democracy and legality and also with the obligations which the Governments of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. took upon themselves with respect to Korea.

In connection with the assertions contained in Mr. Lovett's letter concerning the position of the Soviet delegation to the Joint Commission, the sense of which is that the Soviet delegation does not display sufficient understanding of the proposals of the American delegation, I see no necessity for stopping on these assertions in view of their obvious unsoundness.

At the same time I cannot fail to express regret concerning unilateral acts undertaken by you such as the despatch of an invitation to the Governments of Great Britain and China to take part in the discussion of this question, fixing the place and date for the conference.

The Soviet Government considers inexpedient your proposal to submit the question of the establishment of a provisional Korean democratic government to the consideration of the Governments of the four countries in as much as the Joint Commission is still far from exhausting all its possibilities for working out agreed recommendations, which is entirely possible. The "United States proposals concerning Korea" set forth in Mr. Lovett's letter are also unacceptable.

These proposals cannot fail to entail the further division of Korea in as much as they envisage the establishment of separate provisional legislative assemblies in the south and in the north of Korea (in the Soviet and American zones) whereas the vital task is to achieve as rapidly as possible the establishment of a single, even though provisional, organ of authority—the General Korean Provisional Democratic Government. The American proposal does not correct the situation now existing in Korea—the division of the country into two zones, to the liquidation of which all efforts should be directed,—but on the contrary consolidates this abnormal situation.

Having in mind that the proposal for the consideration of the question of Korea in a joint conference of the representatives of the four powers does not stem from the Moscow decision of the three Ministers for Foreign Affairs concerning Korea, and taking into consideration the views set forth above, the Soviet Government sees no possibility of accepting the proposals advanced in Mr. Lovett's letter.

Copies of this letter are being sent by me to the Governments of Great Britain and China.

Please accept [etc.],

V. M. Molotov

[Moscow,] September 4, 1947.

[\[1\]](#) Transmitted to the Department by the Soviet Chargé (Tsarapkin) in his note 175, September 5, not printed [in Foreign Relations of the United States].