

October 24, 1945
**Memorandum of a Conversation between W.A.
Harriman and Stalin**

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Summary:

W.A. Harriman and Stalin discuss post-war peace treaties and discuss who will be invited to participate in negotiations in the European war.

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English

Contents:

Transcript - English

Memorandum of a Conversation
between W.A. Harriman and Stalin

TOP SECRET [REDACTED] Gagri, October 24, 1945.

Conversation

Present: [REDACTED] Generalissimus I. V. Stalin
Mr. Pavlov, Soviet Interpreter

W. A. Harriman, American Ambassador
Edward Page, First Secretary of Embassy

Subject: [REDACTED] 1. The Japanese Situation.
2. The Procedural Question.

After a preliminary exchange of remarks on the Caucasian coast and Generalissimus Stalin's health, the Ambassador presented to him the President's message with Russian translation, stating that the President was anxious to obtain his reaction thereto. The President wished to know what was on the Generalissimus' mind and he had therefore instructed the Ambassador personally to discuss the message with him.

The Generalissimus read the message carefully, looked up, and stated "the Japanese question is not touched upon here". The Ambassador stated that he was not surprised that he should bring up this question. He explained that the Japanese question was being discussed at the present time between the State and War departments and General MacArthur and the President hoped to have some concrete proposals ready by October 30 when the meeting of the Far Eastern Advisory Commission would convene. The Ambassador continued that he would be entirely frank providing the Generalissimus would allow him to discuss the matter informally and would accept his remarks as unofficial. If so, he could explain the thinking of the President and his advisors on this question as far as it had gone. Stalin said that he would be grateful for any information, which he, of course, would keep secret. The Ambassador stated that from the beginning the President had not wished any misunderstandings to arise between the Soviet Union and the United States over Japan. As the Generalissimus knew, on instructions from his Government the Ambassador had written Mr. Molotov on August 21 proposing the formation and convocation of a Far Eastern Advisory Commission. He had explained that this body would deal with the political approach to all aspects of the Japanese situation, and also the establishment of control machinery to carry out the surrender terms. This proposal had been made ten to eleven days before General MacArthur had landed in Japan and forced the Japanese to sign the surrender. The Chinese were the first to accept the proposal to establish an advisory commission. The Soviet Government had accepted on September 5. However, the British had not accepted the proposal until the latter part of September. They had misunderstood it thinking that the meetings would continue in Washington. When Mr. Byrnes saw Mr. Bevin in London he had informed him that if the other participants desired the meetings to be transferred to Tokyo the United States Government would agree. Furthermore, the British desired India to be included among the participants. The Ambassador stated that he did not know why the British took so long in making up their mind perhaps they desired to consult the dominions - perhaps it was because of the formation of the new Government.

The Ambassador continued that Mr. Byrnes was ready to discuss all aspects of this matter with a Soviet representative to the meeting in Washington on a bilateral basis if Generalissimus Stalin would send his representative there. These discussions would include the character of the control machinery and Mr. Byrnes would make every effort to come to agreement.

The Ambassador stated that he was unable to give Stalin the details of the proposal which the President would approve after he had consulted his advisors but he could give the Generalissimus a general idea of the thinking in Washington on this matter. From what the Ambassador knew he did not believe that this proposal would prove to be very different from what Molotov had recently written him. He was not authorized to say this - but from what he had learned from the State and War Departments it seemed to him that the President's proposal would be much the same as that suggested by Mr. Molotov. The first phase was, of course, the surrender of Japan and the disarming of the Japanese armed forces on the four main Japanese islands. This was being handled by United States forces. This phase of the surrender had about terminated or would in a few weeks. It was thought more advisable to disarm the Japanese with one army than with several since many risks were involved. Following the surrender and disarmament of the Japanese armies it was contemplated to invite the Russian, Chinese and British to send a certain number of troops to join in the second phase of the control of Japan - the occupational period. The Ambassador stated that he could not give the Generalissimus the exact number of foreign troops his Government had in mind as he did not yet know how many it had been determined should be kept on the Japanese islands. Furthermore, he could not define the exact relationship between these foreign troops and General MacArthur - that was another subject under discussion at the present time. In general however, there should not be separate zones of occupation and they should carry out the orders of the United States Commander.

The Ambassador continued that there was another conception under consideration in Washington; namely, that the commanding generals of the foreign troops should act with MacArthur as a military council. They would be furnished full information on all matters pertaining to Japan and there would be full discussion on all questions. Every attempt would be made to reach agreement on these questions, with the understanding that if no agreement were reached the last word would rest with MacArthur.

The Advisory Commission which would shortly meet in Washington would move to Tokyo and deal with all political and economic questions regarding Japan. There was also another idea, namely, to combine the two functions, i.e., military and political into one political council. This matter was at present under consideration but was subject to discussion and final decision. In general the basic conception was to set up machinery through which Japanese political, economic and other questions might be fully discussed by the Allies in order that decisions might be reached. However, as the situation was so complex, it was considered that in the last analysis the final authority of General MacArthur must be the ruling one if the agreement were not reached. The Ambassador hoped that this would not be the case.

Generalissimus Stalin said that he was very grateful to receive this information from the Ambassador. He realized that by bringing up the question of the control machinery for Japan he was placing the Ambassador in an embarrassing position. The Ambassador replied that he did not believe there was anything that he and the Generalissimus could not discuss frankly.

The Generalissimus continued that he had been forced to raise this question and it was linked up with the Truman message. He wished to make a few remarks on the substance of the question of the control machinery for Japan. The proper term to use was "Control Commission" and not "Control Council", which existed only in Germany where there was no government. There was a government in Japan and it was therefore more proper to speak of the control machinery as a Control Commission. Analogy could be found in Hungary and Rumania where there was a Control Commission and where the final word rested with the Soviet commander. In Rumania there were no troops other than Soviet and the final word rested with the Chairman of the Control Commission though not in the same measure as stated by Ambassador Harriman in respect to Japan. It went without saying that the United States

representative, General MacArthur, should be the permanent Chairman of the Control Commission and should have the final voice. However, if there were other troops on the Japanese islands, as there were in Germany, the effect would be to restrict the rights of General MacArthur. This was not desirable. In order to preserve the freedom of action of MacArthur it, perhaps, might not be advisable to send other troops to Japan. This was more logical.

The Generalissimus then turned to President Truman's message and inquired "what does Mr. Byrnes' compromise amount to? Can you explain the substance of the proposal not accepted by Mr. Molotov?"

The Ambassador stated that Mr. Molotov had never rejected Mr. Byrnes' proposal. He had said that he had to consult this Government in person. At the September 11th meeting of the Foreign Ministers' Council, Mr. Molotov had agreed that it would be proper to invite France and China - and also the United States, when Finland was discussed - to remain in the room during the discussions of all the peace treaties. Only those agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference could vote on matters regarding these treaties. The other representatives could only participate in the meetings and make comments. However, after sixteen meetings Mr. Molotov said that this procedure was a mistake and that the Foreign Ministers should return to the restricted procedure under the 4-3-2 formula. Mr. Byrnes had replied that it would be impossible to humiliate the French and China by throwing them out after they had been invited to participate in sixteen meetings, unless some agreement were reached as to when they should be invited back. Mr. Bevin had agreed to this. Mr. Byrnes had freely admitted that if Mr. Molotov had taken this position on the first day the meetings could have been thus limited. However, the Potsdam Agreement contained authorization to invite the other nations to participate in the peace discussions. Mr. Byrnes was now trying to find a dignified way to solve the present impasse. He had suggested that after the peace treaties had been drafted by the smaller groups in accordance with the Potsdam Decision, a peace conference be held which would be made up of the most interested parties. The Chinese and French had tentatively agreed to this proposal if it were agreed to by all. Mr. Molotov, however, had requested Mr. Byrnes to return to the restricted procedure and to leave the peace conference for the future. Mr. Byrnes did not believe this fair to the French and Chinese and had thus suggested agreement on calling of the peace conference as a compromise. After this conference, only those present at the conference who had been at war with each satellite would conclude the peace. The Ambassador concluded that he was a devil's advocate since he thought Mr. Byrnes' proposal was a very wise one.

Generalissimus Stalin again read the paragraph of the President's message to the effect that in an effort to find a solution acceptable to all Mr. Byrnes had stated that he would accept a narrowing of the draft procedure provided it was agreed to that the council would call a peace conference of the principally interested states. The Generalissimus remarked that there was no reference in this paragraph to those countries that had declared war and whether such countries should be invited to the conference. He remarked that many countries had declared war in order to obtain a seat in the security organization.

The Ambassador stated that Mr. Byrnes had proposed three classes of countries to participate in the peace conferences, namely: (1) the five permanent members of the security council since these nations were primarily interested in the preservation of peace; (2) the European members of the United Nations; and (3) those non-European nations which had supplied substantial armed forces against the Axis. These included Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India and Brazil - the only South American country. Brazil had sent two divisions to Italy.

Generalissimus Stalin, reading from his records of the London meetings, stated that he had understood the proposal as follows: the Council would prepare drafts of the

peace treaties under the 4-3-2 formula to draft the peace treaties. The Council would then call a peace conference made up of the five permanent members of the security organization, all the European United Nations and all the non-European nations which had supplied substantial military contingents. This conference would meet in London and as a basis for its deliberations it would accept the reports of the deputies. After full hearing and discussion final approval of the peace treaties would be made by the states which had waged war with the enemy states. The Ambassador stated that the Generalissimus' understanding of the proposals was correct. However, it should be added that the deputies would draft the treaties under the 4-3-2 formula.

The Generalissimus remarked that if one general conference were to be called he wondered whether Italy, for example, could contribute anything in the discussions on the Finnish treaty. He questioned the advisability of one general conference and developed the theory of a series of conferences, on Bulgaria, Finland, and Rumania for example. He could not see what Brazil could contribute to a conference on Finland and stated that it appeared to him that it would be more feasible to convoke a group of conferences.

The Ambassador stated that the President and Mr. Byrnes agreed that only those states who actually waged war against an individual enemy should have the final say as to the peace and should sign the treaties. They believed however that there was in fact only one European war and all those directly involved in it should be asked to review the work of the Foreign Ministers and present their ideas. However, the final voice should remain with those who had been engaged in war with actual fighting forces with each enemy. He wished to point out that Italy was not one of the United Nations, was an enemy state, and therefore would not be involved in the conference. He continued that it was Mr. Byrnes' idea that all the European countries at war with the Axis should have the right to be heard in such a conference. Although Belgium and Holland, for example, had not been technically at war with Italy they were vitally interested in the peace. There had to be some period when all the European countries had the right to voice their views in connection with the peace treaties. This included China, a permanent member of the Security Council.

The Generalissimus stated that he could accept at the conference those countries who had actually fought but there were other countries who had declared war and who had not sent one soldier to the front. What did they have to do with the peace? President Truman had said that the conference should be made up of those principally interested states. Mr. Byrnes' proposal appeared to broaden this formula. What had Puerto Rico to do with Rumania? It had not sent one soldier abroad. Greece and Yugoslavia had fought against the Italians. The Chinese had not. The fact that the Chinese were a member of the Security Council did not enter the picture. The Security Council had entirely different functions. The peace treaties should be settled now. The Security Council has a future role. It was not called upon to deal with these matters. Justifying Chinese participation in the peace conference on the ground that it was a member of the Security Council was not appropriate. Furthermore, India was not a state. It was a colony. If the British granted India certain rights, dominion status for example, he would favor its participation in the peace conference. However, it was not likely that such rights would be granted.

The Generalissimus continued that he must give the matter more thought. He believed however that a basis for compromise could be found along the following lines:

(1) Call a meeting of the Foreign Ministers to work out the peace treaties on the 4-3-2 formula.

(2) After the peace treaties had been drawn up, call a peace conference of not only those who had signed the armistice but those who had sent contingents to Europe

and had waged war - not those who had technically declared war.

(The Ambassador inquired whether this included those who had fought against any one of the Axis. The Generalissimus replied in the affirmative).

(3) Following the conference, not only the big three but also such countries that had actually waged war should conclude the peace.

The Ambassador stated that it was the President's idea to convoke one conference to which the five draft peace treaties should be submitted rather than separate conferences with all the complications involved.

The Generalissimus stated that he clearly understood this. However, he thought that it might be preferable for example as far as Bulgaria was concerned, to invite the Greeks and the Yugoslavs to attend during the discussions of the Bulgarian treaty. When the Hungarian treaty was under discussion it might be better to invite not only the Big Three but the Czechs and the Yugoslavs. With respect to Italy - who should be invited? The Brazilians? Yes. They had sent two divisions. All countries which had fought against the Italians, not platonically by declaring war but with actual troops, should be invited. The Ambassador had mentioned Belgium. He could understand the participation of the Belgians in the German peace but not their participation in the Italian and Russian peace. They had not sent one soldier to Italy or Rumania.

The Ambassador stated that with respect to Italy a number of countries, including all the dominions and India had been involved. They had all sent troops. The Generalissimus stated that he had no objection to the participation in the Italian peace conference of all those who had actually fought the Italians.

The Ambassador stated that the president's view was that this had been one war. Various countries had participated at different times on different fronts. All the satellite countries had assisted Germany in the war. Furthermore, the armistices with the satellites had been signed on behalf of the United Nations. In addition, the Generalissimus would recall that at Potsdam it had been agreed that the draft peace treaties would be submitted to the United Nations. Therefore all the nations who had participated in the war with substantial forces on any front should be given the opportunity to express their views even though they may not have had troops in one particular theatre. The President felt that unless these countries were consulted ill will would be created unnecessarily throughout the world. These countries were entitled to a voice in the peace. This was a procedure contemplated at Potsdam and one wise to follow out. If attempts were made to restrict the conference the Big Three would only be doing themselves harm in the eyes of the world. Take Norway, for example. The Norwegians had placed their ships in a common pool. They were used wherever needed. Supplies had gone to Italy in them and quite possibly to the air forces which had carried on operations in the Balkans. The Generalissimus abruptly stated that such countries could express their views to the press. The Ambassador stated that the question was quite different. These countries should be asked in a dignified way to come to the peace conference as sovereign states.

The Generalissimus inquired whether Puerto Rico should be asked to such a conference. The Ambassador replied that he would have to correct the Generalissimus. Puerto Rico was United States territory. The Generalissimus corrected himself and said he meant Costa Rica. The Ambassador replied that Mr. Byrnes had suggested that only those who had actually waged war should be invited. Insofar as the South American countries were concerned only Brazil was included on the Secretary's list. The Generalissimus stated he had no objections to Brazil but remarked that Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Haiti had declared war on Rumania. The Ambassador again stated that under Byrnes' formula these countries would not be invited to participate in the peace conference.

The Ambassador continued that according to his understanding the main difference between the Generalissimus' and the President's proposals was that the President wished to submit all the drafts of the peace treaties to one conference and to hear the views of the conferees. The President did not wish to try to decide who had been involved in the war against whom. It had been one war and there should be one conference to which all the peace treaties should be submitted. It would be inadvisable to try to divide up the conference into different groups. The President did not feel that it was possible to segregate one satellite from another. More good will would be created in the world by convoking a general conference. This was in line with the spirit of the United Nations. If that spirit could be agreed to, the Ambassador did not believe that it would be difficult to agree upon a list of nations to be invited. The President was quite prepared to exclude those South American countries which had not been actually involved in the war.

The Generalissimus stated that whenever the Big Three were engaged in making decisions the entire world wondered whether such decisions would be fair. There was always an important moral factor involved. He considered that it would be unfair to place on a par those countries which had waged war and which had been occupied by the Germans, with other countries which had not fought and which had not been occupied. Furthermore, there were countries which had helped the Germans and others which had merely technically declared war. Take Chile, for example: it had helped the Germans and the Japanese. What had Chile to do with Italy or Germany and why should they be invited to attend such a conference. The Ambassador again stated the President agreed that South American countries should not be invited save Brazil. The Generalissimus remarked that Chile was one of the United Nations. The Ambassador stated that notwithstanding this fact it was not on Mr. Byrnes' list. The Generalissimus inquired whether this meant that not all the United Nations would be invited to the conference. The Ambassador stated that only those would be invited which had provided troops and actually waged war.

The Generalissimus stated that he would like to see a concrete list. Such a list could not be drawn up by the deputies of the Foreign Ministers. A conference should be called of the Foreign Ministers and such a list should be drawn up. Furthermore the question of control machinery for Japan should be considered. The deputies alone were not capable of handling such questions. Agreement should be reached first on the list of countries invited to the peace conference. Then agreement should be reached on Japan.

The Ambassador stated that he felt sure the President would agree that the Foreign Ministers should meet again after the question of the peace conference was settled. However, he also felt sure that the Generalissimus would agree that the deputies should continue in the meantime the work as signed to them after general agreement had been reached on the list. The Ambassador then handed the Generalissimus the list of countries, as he recalled it, which Mr. Byrnes had in mind in London. He said that he could not guarantee this list; however, it was substantially correct. The Generalissimus inquired as to the advisability of including China. The Ambassador stated that the President felt strongly that China, as a permanent member of the security organization, should be included. Italy had had interests in the Far East. The Generalissimus remarked that China had sent no forces to Europe. The Ambassador replied that it would be very unfortunate to exclude China since that country was a member of the security council and a member of the Council of Foreign Ministers. The Generalissimus interjected that China was a member of the Foreign Ministers' Council only on matters affecting it. The Ambassador again stated that it would be very unfortunate to leave China out if a general European conference were convoked. He inquired whether China was the only country not on the Generalissimus' list. The Generalissimus stated that he also wished to exclude India, Belgium and Holland. The Ambassador remarked that India had sent troops to the Middle East and to Europe and that he again wished to refer to the principal of one indivisible war. Norway and Holland had supplied ships whenever they were needed. The Generalissimus remarked that if it was one indivisible war Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, for

example, should be invited to the Far East peace discussions. The Ambassador stated that the President divided the European from the Far East war. The Generalissimus apparently accepted this interpretation.

The Generalissimus then turned to that section of Mr. Byrnes' proposal concerning the work of the proposed conference and the conclusion of peace treaties with the satellites and inquired into the exact interpretation of it. The Ambassador stated that what Mr. Byrnes wished to do was to invite the nations on the list to hear the views of these nations but not to conclude the peace. It was not necessary to be bound by the views expressed in this conference. For example, the United States was not at war with Finland. It might wish to have the right to express certain views on Finnish peace. However, it would not sign this peace. Referring to the final stage of concluding the peace treaties the Generalissimus stated that Mr. Byrnes' draft was apparently drawn up in haste. The term "those at war" should be more closely defined. Did this mean those who had actually fought, those who had signed the armistices, or those who had merely declared war. The Ambassador stated that he knew what Mr. Byrnes had in mind. Take Bulgaria for example. He thought it right that the USSR, the U.S.A., Great Britain, the Dominions, White Russia, the Ukraine, Yugoslavia and Greece should conclude the peace with Bulgaria. The Generalissimus brought up the case of Italy. Although India had sent contingents these were rightly British forces. India was not an independent state. The Ambassador remarked that this question had been thrashed out at San Francisco Conference in connection with the Ukraine and White Russia. The Generalissimus stated that he was not pressing for the inclusion of the Ukraine and White Russia in the present conference. The Ambassador stated that India was a British problem. He was not prepared to discuss it. He knew that the British were trying to give India dominion status and he would like to point out that the Indians had actually fought. The Generalissimus stated that he would welcome seeing dominion status accorded India. However, this would not come soon. The Ambassador stated that his Government wished to give India as much prestige as possible. For this reason we would welcome India in the peace conference. The Generalissimus remarked that if India were invited Indochina should also be included. However, we believed that if India were invited to the conference the world at large would not think it a wise move. With respect to India's participation in the world organization this was a future problem. The world organization would last a long time. The peace treaties should be drawn up immediately. It was a bad analogy to compare the peace conference under discussion with the United Nations Organization. No one had suggested that Turkey or the Argentine be invited to the present conference. The peace conference and the United Nations were two entirely different things. The Ambassador again referred to India and stated that not only had that country sent substantial troops to the Middle East but had fought well. The Generalissimus again repeated that these were British troops. India was not allowed to have its own troops. It did not have its own government or foreign minister. He said that if India were not invited this would expedite the accordance of dominion status. If India were not invited it could be said that the British and Americans wished to invite India but that Stalin had frustrated these plans. In this case, he would make it clear why he had opposed the inclusion of India. This would give him a pretext to say something publicly about India. The Ambassador stated that he knew that the President wished to invite India in order to give that country more prestige. It was a matter of opinion whether the extension of such an invitation would encourage the development of dominion status.

The Ambassador stated that he would like to discuss a little further the Japanese question. However, since he had already taken up three hours of the Generalissimus's time he would like to know whether the Generalissimus wished to continue the conversation or postpone the consideration of this subject until the following day. The Generalissimus replied that he would prefer to discuss the Japanese problem tomorrow and suggested a meeting at 7:00 P.M.

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