

Japan 1945-1947: The Americanization of Occupation Control

by Henry C. Bush

The following article traces the shift from Allied (British-British Commonwealth-Chinese-Russian-American) plans for Occupation control and supervision of Japan to American control, during the early years of the Occupation; and it attempts to account for the shift. It is based upon English and French language material.

It is necessary to recall that in 1945 the wartime alliance had been in existence four years and it was generally assumed in America and in Britain that Russia would continue to cooperate after the war. And in democracies, when some such political assumption about a situation or about another people is generally held it is modified only very slowly, generally after much public oratory and exhortation by leaders. There were even very recent precedents for the application of this assumption to Japan; Germany had sued for peace early in 1945 and multilateral 4-nation control (the U.S.S.R., Britain, France, and America) had been put into effect in Germany and in Austria, and 4-nation control commissions were then being formed to operate the Eastern European nations which had but recently been German allies.

So, originally, the control and Occupation organizations for Japan were multilateral in form and in intention. The title created for General MacArthur at the time of the news of the surrender was Supreme Commander for the *Allied* Powers. Representatives of the major Allies were on board the *U.S.S. Missouri* and signed the actual surrender document. After the news of peace the U.S.S.R., Australia

and New Zealand immediately began to press the U.S. for multilateral control machinery, and at a conference of the British, American and Russian Foreign Ministers at Moscow in December, 1945, formal agreement was reached and two organizations were created to control Japan—the Far Eastern Commission and the Allied Council for Japan.

The Far Eastern Commission, consisting of representatives of eleven nations concerned with the Far Eastern area (the United States, China, Britain, the U.S.S.R., Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Phillipine Republic, and India) was designated as the policy-making body for Japan Occupation matters. It was formally stated to have the power to review and change any action by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. And three subjects were specifically reserved to the Far Eastern Commission: (1) any change of regime of control, (2) fundamental changes in the Japanese constitutional structure, and (3) any change in the Japanese Government as a whole. On these three subjects the Supreme Commander was to wait for the Far Eastern Commission to direct him; on all other matters the Commander's powers were merely interim, subject to review and modification by the policy-making body, the Far Eastern Commission. The Commission sat in Washington, D. C.

The Allied Council for Japan was to sit in Tokyo, to consist of four representatives (for the United States, China, the British Commonwealth, and the U.S.S.R.), and it was to "consult with and advise" the Supreme Commander. Further, time permitting, it was to consider in advance of issuance, all directives and other orders issued by the Supreme Commander to the Japanese Government concerning "matters of substance." It was empowered to require, by one vote, review by the Far Eastern Commission of any orders which the Supreme Commander

might issue implementing policy decisions of the Far Eastern Commission on any of the three completely reserved subjects listed above.

In form the United States seemingly retained only control of actual military operations, authority to issue interim directives in urgent matters, and executive administrative jurisdiction on-the-spot (in that S.C. A.P. headquarters was in Japan, the Far Eastern Commission was far off in Washington, and although the Allied Council was in Japan it was merely advisory. The international chain of command was intended to be:

ALLIED COUNCIL FOR JAPAN: to send information to the Far Eastern Commission and to act as advisor and to watch the administrative head, the Supreme Commander.

FAR EASTERN COMMISSION: to create policy; to actually decide what was to be done to and for Japan.

SUPREME COMMANDER FOR THE ALLIED POWERS: merely to translate F.E.C. acts into directives and to see that they were put into effect by the Japanese Government.

JAPANESE GOVERNMENT: to effect F.E.C. policy, subject to S.C.A.P. supervision.

So much for the multilateral control of Japan in form. In fact, the control of Japan immediately became, and stayed, American and particularly MacArthurian (to coin an adjective) – so much the latter that there were whimsical (and sometimes bitter) remarks in the American and European press and learned journals about “the MacArthur Shogunate,” and to the effect that MacArthur had inherited the mantle of the

Tenno when the Tenno put it off to become, by choice, merely Emperor. In fact the Allied Council for Japan spent its time defending its waning prestige against General MacArthur's Council representatives' attacks upon its prerogatives. In fact the Far Eastern Commission, in Washington, a group of excellently qualified gentlemen, remained a kind of harmless debating body (rather like the House of Lords in Britain of which one Englishman observed that they are "very useful to correct mistakes in punctuation in legislation.") Let me trace this process of the Americanization of Allied control of Japan.

The General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander (generally known in Japan as simply S.C.A.P. or SCAP) was itself small — small, that is, for the task of running a nation. It consisted of about 8,000 Americans (a purely headquarters group, a large part of which was engaged in finding out from Japanese records and from Japanese specialists just what did happen during the war and just what was the then-present state of the Japanese economy and political structure. It was aided by from 1,200 to 2,000 Americans who were "field teams" whose job it was to check, throughout Japan, to determine the degree of compliance or non-compliance with S.C.A.P. directives and suggestions. And S.C.A.P. and its field teams were militarily supported by garrison troops (at the peak about 150,000 American and 30,000 British Commonwealth soldiers). In all, an exceedingly small control organization. And when one considers that, for example, more than 2,000,000 U.S. full-time employees are needed to run American national government (exclusive of police work, exclusive of the U.S. national Army and armed forces, exclusive of state, country, and city government; when one considers the fantastic number of officials who made up the pre-war Japanese government control machinery; and, further, when one

adds the language handicap (the fact that only a few of the S. C. A. P. group spoke Japanese) one wonders not at the confusion and mistakes of the Occupation but that so small a group should have presumed to try.

But, aside from size, (or lack of size) the local body, MacArthur's S.C.A.P. headquarters, was incredibly aided by the peculiar acceptance, by the Japanese people, of MacArthur as a personal leader. He became—to a degree which is without any historical precedent which I can discover—not an alien ex-enemy conqueror but a symbol of personal leadership, a kind of father-symbol. It was as if the conqueror had come to tea.

The practical effect of this (to the Americans) strange, unexpected, and gratifying response of large numbers of the Japanese people to MacArthur was that it increased MacArthur's personal power and his headquarters' power enormously. Because of his personal prestige in Japan his personal utterances and acts, even unofficial ones, were vastly more important than policy directives written in Washington. The effect was to make S.C.A.P. a kind of personal MacArthur satrapy (independent, to a considerable degree, of both the U. S. Government and the Far Eastern Commission, whenever MacArthur chose to declare it independent of Washington supervision or whenever he chose to act independently of the orders and wishes of his nominal superiors.)

And he often did. The second factor in the MacArthurization and Americanization of the Allied control and Occupation of Japan was certainly the MacArthur personality. He is, all observers but those who were his personal lieges agree, “a man of extraordinary talents, mortgaged, however, to his inordinate vanity.”⁽¹⁾ He is a man who (another observer reported) “can conceive of almost anything except the possibi-

lity that he might be mistaken." He is a man who does not take criticism—except to take it as a personal affront.

(1) the quotoion is from The Forrestal Diary, published posthumously. James Forrestal, at the time he noted MacArthur's "inordinate vanity", was U.S. Secretary for National Defense and MacArthur's superior.

Let us now review the attempts of the policy-making organization, the Far Eastern Commission, to make Allied policy with respect to Japan. On March 21, 1946 the F.E.C. asked MacArthur if he did not think the general Japanese election, scheduled for April 10, 1946, should be postponed. MacArthur replied, "No," and added that "the suggested statement seems wholly unnecessary." (2) On March 30 the Commission

(2) quotations are from the U.S. Department of State Bulletins "agreed that any action on its part...was unnecessary." On April 18 and 25, 1946, the F.E.C. questioned the need for 500,000 tons of food being shipped to Japan by the United States. (Not that the F.E.C. was being ungenerous or vindictive but that there was at this time a general expectation of famine in west Germany and in India and the Commission was questioning whether this grain ought not to be shared with western European countries and British Empire lands.) MacArthur informed the F.E.C. that the shipments were "essential to the safety of the occupying forces." On August 15, 1946 the F.E.C. adopted a policy on the "Exercise of Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction over Nationals of Members of the United Nations." On October 27, 1946 the F.E.C. established an Inter-Allied Trade Board for Japan—which never functioned. On December 6, 1946 the F.E.C. adopted a policy to govern (or stimulate, or permit) Japanese labor unions. In the February 1, 1947 attempt at a general strike for the avowed purpose of "overthrowing the Shigeru Yoshida Government" Japanese labor union

federations cited and quoted this F.E.C. policy to justify their acts; MacArthur ignored it. Jan. 30, 1937 the F.E.C. adopted a policy prohibiting Japanese developments in atomic fission. March 14, 1947 the F.E.C. approved a set of "Interim Principles for Restitution of Identifiable Property Confiscated in Japan from Allied Nationals." Feb. 3, 1947 the F.E.C. produced a detailed policy dealing with costs and packaging of reparations. March 14, 1947 the F.E.C. resolved that Japanese consumption levels (e.g. the use of textiles per capita) should be held to certain levels. March 27, 1947 the F.E.C. approved a "Policy for the Revision of the Japanese Educational System,"—a restatement of the U.S. Education Mission to Japan's recommendations. This Mission's recommendations had been translated into SCAP directives early in 1946 without waiting for F.E.C. action. April 3, 1947, the F.E.C. having failed to agree to any reparations policy (a number of small nations wanting more than there was), MacArthur proceeded to act on his own to begin reparations. Such was the unimpressive record, during the first several years, of the policy-making body in Washington. The Japanese Constitution is a case in point. The draft of the Constitution (which, with only negligible changes, became the present Japanese Constitution) was released by S.C.A.P. March 6, 1946, with a personal statement by General MacArthur saying "it has my full approval" — before the F.E.C. received a copy of it. On March 20 the F.E.C. issued an admonition to General MacArthur reading in part "The Commission notes the encouragement given to the Japanese people in the Supreme Commander's announcement that the draft has his personal approval. It is somewhat apprehensive that this approval may be misunderstood by the Japanese public and taken to mean that this particular draft has the approval of the Powers represented on this Commission. ...such

is not necessarily the case... April 12, 1946 the F.E.C. requested that General MacArthur send a staff officer to Washington to confer with the F.E.C. on changes in any new Japanese constitution. MacArthur answered that he had been giving the constitution his personal attention and no officer was in a position to express his views and that he could not spare an officer anyway. (He certainly had been giving it his personal attention. Any student of prose style who examines the draft which became the constitution and compares it with MacArthur's personal style will be struck by the following: (1) that the draft constitution read well in English, read badly (Japanese commentators and political leaders observed) in Japanese, (2) that certain parts—notably the much-discussed Article IX (“War...is forever renounced...land, sea, and air forces...will never be authorized”) clearly bear the MacArthur touch.) On May 3 the F.E.C. approved a set of “Criteria for the Adoption of a New Japanese Constitution”; on July 2 a “Basic Principles for a New Japanese Constitution.” On Sept. 25 followed other provisions. On Oct. 17 a system of review of any constitution was recommended by the F.E.C. All of these were promptly forwarded to S.C.A.P. All of them were in form mandatory. The Constitutional draft, as presented, as argued, as accepted in Japan, remained the S.C.A.P. draft of March 6. The personal prestige of MacArthur outweighed the directives and resolutions of the F.E.C., in Japan.

To sum up: in attempts to deal directly with the Supreme Commander, the F.E.C. failed to secure recognition of its vested authority and was treated in a manner almost disrespectful; in dealing with the U.S. Government, although relations were always cordial, the F.E.C. restricted itself to minor business and to writing policies to which no one could conceivably object and to restating in general terms matters

which S.C.A.P. had already ordered or effected ahead of the F.E.C.. When the F.E.C. did presume to question American policy as effected by MacArthur it was confronted by MacArthur wearing his other hat—that of Commander-in-chief of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific, and it was told that the policy it was questioning was a matter of “conduct of military operations” and not to be argued. And when the Commission failed to act the S.C.A.P. acted for it and independently of it. It never amounted to much.

Let us now examine the unhappy life of the supervising body in Japan, the Allied Council for Japan. It began meeting in Tokyo April 5, 1946. It was immediately affected by the world-wide situation—the rapid decline of wartime allied cooperation and the rapid increase of Russian-American dissention. Russian policy, from the moment the Russian delegation to the Allied Council reached Japan, was to use the Council as a sounding-board for anti-U.S. propaganda. U.S. policy simultaneously and defensively became to restrict the Council to doing nothing in order to restrict Russian propaganda in Japan. And so Allied supervision failed in Japan, in order to prevent the spread of Communist propaganda and Russian dissention. The Allied Council's initial session, April 5, is an epitome of its whole existence. April 5, the Council heard a welcoming address by the Supreme Commander, MacArthur. Except that it was hardly a welcome. MacArthur emphasized that the Allied Council was merely advisory, expressed his disapproval of what he called “sharp and ill-conceived criticism” —the reader is reminded that no Council member had at this moment yet had opportunity to say one official word—defended his Occupation policies and remarked that he would be too busy to be present himself at meetings of the Council. And soon after General MacArthur finished

his address the Soviet representative, General Kuzma Derevyanko, demanded; (1) that the Council be sent all SCAP directives 7 days prior to issuance and all Japanese Government ordinances 10 days prior to promulgation, (2) that the Council be furnished copies of all correspondence between SCAP and the Japanese Government since September, 1945, and (3) that new elections be provided for if the candidates elected in the then-imminent April 10 national election should prove "unsuitable."—i. e. an attempt, immediately, by Russia, to stretch the Council's advisory status to amount to almost total supervision of SCAP. The battle was joined the first day. It did not change in later sessions. April 17 and 18 the U.S. representative answered Derevyanko's demands with counter propaganda questioning his intentions, and used methods similar to filibustering—so that the U.S. speaker monopolized the session. April 19—26 the U.S. and the Council exchanged verbal blows about the control of Council witnesses. April 30 the Council attempted to question U.S. food allotments to Japan; the U.S. representative answered that the Council had no authority in such matters. Here, as in Washington at the Far Eastern Commission, the answer was that MacArthur was at that moment wearing his other hat—that of Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific.

May 15 Derevyanko questioned the "May Day Manifesto" complaints. (Two or three weeks before some 300,000 to 500,000 Japanese had paraded in Tokyo, massed in front of Prime Minister Shidehara's residence and the Diet Chamber, then proceeded to Hibiya Park, a bill of complaints had been read rapidly and largely unintelligibly over a public address system and endorsed—it was claimed—by a voice vote. This bill of complaints had been submitted unsigned to the Allied Council.) The complaints resembled the then-current Japanese

Communist Party line (if one could discern a line in the confusion then prevalent among the Communist Party elite) and the U.S. representative reacted to Russian support of these Communist-promoted demands as if the petition were a call by the U.S.S.R. for armed insurrection. May 16, May 30, and June 12, in meetings of the Allied Council, the U.S. and Russian representatives harangued each other about this matter.

The U.S. or SCAP or both adopted other tactics. SCAP began to submit technical and detailed subjects to the Council to keep the political propaganda out of the agenda. (E.g. July 10 SCAP submitted four subjects for Allied Council deliberation: "Maritime Quarantine," "Measures Taken to Prevent Disease in Japan," "Pure Food and Drug Legislation" and "Standardization of Laws Regarding Food Handlers and Food Distributing Agencies." The Council refused to discuss them.) The same day Derevyanko countered with a 22-point labor program containing a proposal to legalize worker-seizure of factories; the U.S. representative called this Communist propaganda. So it continued. Propaganda vs. counter-propaganda. In one interval MacArthur and SCAP took the position that in the absence of any SCAP directives the Council had nothing to meet about and discuss. SCAP then took to not issuing directives for many months so that the Council would have no business; SCAP governed Japan "by suggestion" to Japanese Government leaders. There is nothing to be gained by reviewing the rest of the U.S. vs. the U.S.S.R. battle for the last word in the successive ineffective meeting of the Allied Council for Japan. The facts are that the control of Japan was overshadowed by the growing struggle between East and West (between Russian East and British-American West) in the world and particularly in Europe and that this, combined with

MacArthur's extraordinary sensitivity to any supervision or criticism by anybody or any group, effectively shortened the time—a long time—which it took the Western European nations and America to realize (in Europe) that Russia did not play the game, that Russia was not going to cooperate multilaterally. The situation of trying to operate and govern the world by multilateral machinery and organizations (which assumed Russian cooperation) in the situation of Russian noncooperation and Russian abuse of the multilateral machinery and organizations was summed up by U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes, testifying before the U.S. Senate War Investigating Committee in late 1946:

...in the Pacific, where we are in control, we have been able to go ahead...without interference from anybody...He (MacArthur) has a Russian there but he can put a finger on him. You can't stop them in Europe but...MacArthur does not permit them to function. He is holding them down.

The chain of command in the control of Japan was not that suggested by international agreements and that summed up on page 3 but rather:

FAR EASTERN COMMISSION: meaningless debating society

ALLIED COUNCIL FOR JAPAN: one more Russian-American propaganda forum, not affecting Japan policy

U.S. GOVERNMENT: primary originator of Japan control and Occupation policy

S.C.A.P.: also a primary originator of Japan control and Occupation policy, generally in obedience to and coordinated with the U.S. Government but frequently independent of it

JAPANESE GOVERNMENT: responsible only to S.C.A.P.

It is always a frustrating and difficult and largely useless business to speculate about what might have resulted if this or that had happened. Nevertheless, in Europe and in the world generally it took America and the western European nations a year and a half or more after the war to wake to the implications of Russian methods and Russian misuse and abuse of seemingly multilateral all-Allied organizations and institutions and powers. The results are a Europe divided by the Iron Curtain. The results are two Germanies, two Austrias, two Koreas. The general pattern in Europe was that Russia used the organizations and machinery and institutions intended to govern multilaterally, used them to stop effective action, while their foreign policy was furthered by the Red Army, by the domestic Communist parties, and by Russian money and by Russian diplomats abroad. Then the areas effectively undermined or subverted were pulled free of the multilateral organization.

Consider the MacArthur-Derevyanko (that is, U.S. vs. U.S.S.R.) battle in Japan but outside the Allied Council. I can present (because of lack of space) only a small part of the evidence of attempted subversion here. For example, when the British Commonwealth sent its mission to Japan to represent Britain, Australia, India, and New Zealand, on the Allied Council for Japan it consisted of 10 or 20 individuals. When the Russian group arrived, it numbered some 400 persons, mostly "cultural relations specialists" (propagandists). For example, the cost of maintaining an office and staff for representation in the Allied Council was chargeable to Japan. The method was to simply send the total bill at the end of each month to the Japanese Government. The Soviet mission's bill for the first full month of operation in Tokyo (May, 1946) was 6,000,000 yen; for June, 1946 it was 9,000,000 yen. Simultaneously the Japanese

Communist Party began to show signs of having money which could not otherwise be accounted for. MacArthur's headquarters, S.C.A.P., placed restrictions and ceilings upon Allied Council mission expenditures and effectively stopped this process of Russian bleeding of the Japanese Government to support the Japanese Communist Party. For example, fantastic amounts of Communist Party propaganda, printed in Japanese (allegedly in Karafuto) began to arrive addressed to the Russian Allied Council Mission. Handsome magazines, for which neither paper nor money was available in Japan at the time,—e.g. Soviet Culture, edited by unidentified "friends of the Soviet Association"—began to reach Tokyo and other cities' booksellers at very low prices. They were brought in through the Russian Control Mission staff organization. For example, the Soviet Allied Council staff began to use the device of the "press conference" to imply Russian importance in S.C.A.P. policy. E.g. whenever Derevyanko approved of a piece of S.C.A.P.-recommended law (e.g. the land reform bill), although Russia may have had nothing to do with it, the Russians would call a great conference of the Japanese and American and western European newspaper and magazine representatives and would claim that they had originated the law.

I am not arguing that the Communists and Communism would probably, in other circumstances, have ever siezed control of Japan. I do argue that the combination of Russian abuse of multilateral organizations, western European and American slowness (as in Europe) in waking to the implications of Russian non-cooperation and Russian goals and methods, Russian money and Communist Party agitation might have considerably furthered Japanese social disintegration and chaos. Things were bad in the immediately postwar years everywhere, in Japan too but not particularly. (I mean not more so than in say

Germany or Austria or Italy.) In such situations of minimum effective control by governmental machinery, effective agitation and disorganization is easy, minority leadership is easy, and the Communists and Russians are expert at both. Compare Japan (shorn of Manchukuo, the Kuriles, Karafuto, Korea, and Taiwan, but nevertheless with the home archipelago intact and today wholly Japanese) with the two Germanies and the two Koreas. It is a perhaps unique historical instance in which the peculiar acceptance, by the Japanese people, of the Allied conqueror, General MacArthur, as a personal leader, combined with the extraordinary sensitivity and vanity of the White Shogun combined to bridge a gap here which was not bridged for a year and a half or two years in Europe.

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