



<http://gdc.gale.com/archivesunbound/>

RECORDS OF THE FAR EASTERN COMMISSION, 1945-1952



All the activities of the multinational Far Eastern Commission (FEC), which oversaw the postwar governing and reconstruction of Japan, are fully documented in this publication. The establishment of FEC was decided upon in late December 1945 at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers. It represented the Allied Powers led by the U.S., the U.K., China, and the U.S.S.R. as the top-level policy formulating body with regard to the occupation of Japan. The FEC was charged with the task of producing policies, principles, and criteria to which Japan would have to fully conform in order to implement the terms of surrender stipulated by the Potsdam Declaration.

Date Range: 1945-1952

Content: 187,990 images

Source Library: U.S. National Archives

Detailed Description:

All the activities of the multinational Far Eastern Commission (FEC), which oversaw the postwar governing and reconstruction of Japan, are fully documented in this publication of the records now held by the National Archives. Founded in Moscow in 1945, the FEC was composed of representatives from 11 countries, including the United States, the USSR, Great Britain, and Nationalist China. The body's two main functions were to formulate policy in accordance with Japan's obligations under the terms of surrender and to consult with the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, who was in effect the country's military governor. The FEC set up seven committees: Reparations, Economic and Financial Affairs, Constitutional and Legal Reform, Strengthening of Democratic Tendencies, War Criminals, Aliens in Japan, and Disarmament of Japan.

Planning for the Unconditional Surrender and Postwar Japan

During the war specific conditions for peace in the Far East were outlined at the Cairo Conference in November 1943 when the leaders of the United States, Great Britain, and the Republic of China called for the unconditional surrender of Japan. The Allies declared as their war aim that Japan would be reduced to its territorial status of 1868 and that in due course Korea should become free and independent. The Soviet Union later agreed to these

terms. At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the Allies reaffirmed the terms of the Cairo Declaration and further declared that the Japanese people as a race would not be enslaved and that the Japanese nation would not be destroyed. Democratic institutions in Japan would be revived and strengthened and Japan would be permitted to maintain those industries necessary to sustain its economy. American administration of the occupation began more than a fortnight before the formal capitulation of Japan. As a result of an agreement among the Allies, on August 13, 1945, General Douglas MacArthur was notified of his appointment as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers and he was directed to receive the formal surrender of Japan and to implement the surrender terms. As there was no Allied apparatus to supervise the occupation the United States, with the assent of the other Allied powers, assumed primary responsibility for the occupation. American policies set forth the framework of the occupation, and prior to the establishment of the Far East Commission, administration of the occupation was conducted almost exclusively by directives issued by the United States. The Initial Post-Surrender Policy specified that every effort would be made to honor the wishes of the major allied powers, but that "in the event of any difference of opinion among them, the policy of the United States will govern". The paramount role of the United States was affirmed in the protocol known as the Terms of Reference of the Far Eastern Commission. The Far Eastern Commission was established at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945 by representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of China, France, India, and the Netherlands. It was agreed at the Moscow Conference and made public in communique issued at the end of the conference on December 27, 1945 that the Far Eastern Advisory Commission (FEAC) would become the Far Eastern Commission (FEC), it would be based in Washington, and would oversee the Allied Council for Japan. This arrangement was similar to those that the Allies had set up for overseeing the defeated Axis powers in Europe. In a mirror image of those Axis countries, like Hungary, which fell to the Soviet Union and were occupied by the Red Army alone, Japan having fallen to the United States and occupied by the U.S. Army, the United States was given the dominant position on the Tokyo based Allied Council for Japan. The change in name of the FEAC to FEC was significant because as the Secretary of State James F. Byrnes reported after the Conference "As early as August 9 we invited the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and China to join with us in carrying out the objectives of the Potsdam Declaration and the Terms of Surrender for Japan. The Far Eastern Advisory Commission was established in October, but Great Britain had reservations regarding its advisory character, and the Soviet Union requested a decision regarding control machinery in Tokyo before joining the work of the Commission." The Commission, based in Washington, D.C., ostensibly formulated the policies, principles, and standards by which Japan would satisfy its surrender obligations, and transmitted its decisions through the U.S. Government to SCAP. Supplementing the Far Eastern Commission was the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ), also established by the Moscow Agreement. Located in Tokyo the council consisted of SCAP (who also chaired the council) and representatives of the Soviet Union, China, and Great Britain. The Allied Council for Japan was to consult with and advise SCAP on implementation of the terms of surrender, occupation, and the control of Japan. However the Far Eastern Commission and the Allied

Council for Japan were never effective as consultative or policy-making bodies as basic occupation policies had been preempted and implemented by the United States and the two bodies were beset by fundamental ideological disagreements. SCAP therefore continued the occupation under the general guidance of the U.S. Government and, as described in an official history, "although the occupation was the formal responsibility of the Allied Powers, it was, in fact, American". As agreed in the Moscow Conference communique of December 27, 1945, the FEC and the Allied Council for Japan were dismantled following the Japanese Peace Treaty of September 8, 1951.

History of the Far Eastern Commission

The Far Eastern Commission (FEC) was established to formulate Allied policies for the occupation of Japan. The records were transferred to the custody of the U.S. government in 1952 and consist of the following nine series: Records of the Far Eastern Advisory Commission; Agenda and Minutes for Meetings 1-222; Verbatim Transcripts of Meeting 1-222; Numbered Policy Document Series; French, Russian, and Chinese Translations of Minutes and Documents; Records of the Committees; Far Eastern Commission Reference Subject Files; Subject File of the Secretariat General; and U.S. Delegation Subject Files. The first six series consist of documents created by the FEC, and the last three series subject files consist of materials from other sources-most notably the U.S. Department of State, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ SCAP), and various newspaper clippings.

Any understanding of the creation of the FEC must be framed in the context of the wartime conferences of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Josef Stalin. While the United States maneuvered to gain some control in the Balkan states after the surrender of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union was just as interested in controlling postwar events in China and Japan. Neither the Soviets nor the Americans, however, were willing to compromise their absolute political and military control over the former Axis territories and countries they now occupied. But because Japan was not divided into Allied zones, as was Germany, the British also wanted a larger role in the postwar government of Japan. Under this additional pressure U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes agreed to the formation of the commission at the December 1945 Moscow Conference along with the smaller Allied Council of Japan (ACJ), which served as the FEC's on-site "eyes and ears." The FEC, which met in the Japanese Embassy Building in Washington, replaced the Far Eastern Advisory Committee (FEAC), a purely advisory group in which the Soviets did not wish to participate.

What the Soviets wanted was veto power over U.S. government policies, which the Americans were unwilling to grant. In theory, the FEC was to advise the U.S. government (via the State Department) of its recommendations. The "Big Four" powers-the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and Nationalist China-had to agree upon each of these recommendations before they were considered binding, so in essence the major powers did have veto power. In reality, however, the convoluted voting procedures delayed recommendations considerably (the FEC did not agree upon a post-surrender policy, for example, until 1947). Complicating matters further was the fact that the Defense Department,

rather than the State Department, was controlling policymaking in Japan. Interdepartmental rivalries had to be overcome for FEC directives to be effective. Thus, the new commission was not much of an improvement in terms of authority. The FEC records are, however, the best indication of the issues and arguments over the administration of Japan, both on an international level as well as within the U.S. government.

The FEC was made up of eleven (later thirteen) countries: Australia, Canada, China, France, India, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and the United States (Burma and Pakistan joined later). Although it was set up to enable the Allies to have a say in the administration of postwar Japan, it had no authority over General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). Washington retained the right to issue binding "interim directives" to SCAP in cases of dissent on nearly every issue; MacArthur, who resented the presence of outside interference, tended to ignore or act on various issues before they were discussed and decided upon by the FEC.

Because of these constraints the FEC focused primarily on Japanese economics; the majority of its work centered on reparations and transfers of industrial equipment. The reparations issue quickly became contentious, as the claims made by countries affected by the war quickly amounted to more than the total assets of Japan. Furthermore, the majority of those involved in the reconstruction of Japan thought it unproductive to dismantle the Japanese industrial base to be dispersed and rebuilt in other countries, some of which did not have the expertise, money, or infrastructure to allow the industries to function properly. Eventually the United States issued an "urgent unilateral interim directive" in the spring of 1949 which declared the reparations process officially at an end. The FEC also advised SCAP on atomic energy, the Japanese constitution, elections, trade unions, war criminals, and education.

The FEC by definition was limited to Japan in scope and was barred specifically from making any recommendation on military operations or territorial readjustments. In theory the existence of the FEC meant that the United States had turned over some policy-making functions to an international body; the policy of the FEC was thus the policy of the U.S. and ten other governments. In reality, however, the FEC had little impact and its policies were never timely.

The commission was divided into seven committees: 1) Reparations; 2) Economics and Financial Affairs; 3) Constitutional and Legal Reforms; 4) Reorientation (later Strengthening of Democratic Tendencies); 5) War Criminals; 6) Aliens in Japan; and 7) Disarmament of Japan.

The first meeting of the FEC was held in Washington, DC, on February 26, 1946. Major General Frank R. McCoy, the U.S. representative, was elected commission chairman. McCoy had been the former president of the Foreign Policy Association and a member of the Lytton Commission of the League of Nations, which had investigated Japanese aggression in Manchuria in 1932. Nelson T. Johnson, former U.S. ambassador to China and minister to Australia, was named secretary general. In most cases the representatives of the other

member nations were chiefs of the diplomatic mission in Washington; including the staff, the total number of commission personnel was 140.

The Potsdam Declaration of 1945 identified three major objectives for the postwar occupation of Japan: 1) the demobilization and disarmament of the Japanese war machine; 2) the democratization of Japanese political and social institutions; and 3) the construction of a viable economy. Because the FEC was barred from making any recommendations within the military sphere (this was left entirely to the United States), it did not advise on the first. On the other two, however, the FEC was active. Specifically, the FEC forbade all research activity in atomic energy in Japan except as sanctioned by the United Nations; revised the Meiji Constitution of 1889 and helped to establish a new constitution, which was put in force in May 1947; and oversaw the Diet elections of April 1946. The FEC advocated universal adult suffrage, educational equality between boys and girls, and the decentralization of Japanese education.

The greatest impact made by the FEC was unintentional and centered on a numbered policy document known as FEC-230, "Policy on Excessive Concentrations of Economic Power in Japan." This policy document, prepared by U.S. State Department officials, dealt with the elimination of the zaibatsu, which were roughly analogous to state-sponsored monopolies. Many blamed the existence of the zaibatsu for supporting the Japanese militarists during their rise to power in the 1920s and throughout the 1930s, and believed that the breakup of these powerful economic concentrations of wealth were an absolutely necessary step in democratization.

By the time the document was prepared in the spring of 1947, the political climate in the United States had changed. In late 1947 the document was leaked to Newsweek, and various politicians, among them Senator William F. Knowland of California denounced the plan as the "socialistic" work of New Dealers still within the government. AS the Cold War began with the Soviet Union, many politicians thought it unwise to disassemble the containment of Communist expansionism. After a contentious debate, the U.S. government officially withdrew FEC-230 from consideration.

Although the effectiveness of the FEC was limited, the records that it kept on nearly every aspect of postwar Japan are vital reference tools. Of particular interest within the collection are the U.S. delegation Subject Files (Series 9), the Subject File of the Secretariat General (Series 8), and the Numbered Policy Document Series (Series 4). From these starting points, which include related government memorandums, newspapers clippings, and statistical studies, more specialized research into the views and voting records of member countries can be done within the series documenting individual meetings.

About the Records

The Records of the Far Eastern Commission, 1945-1952, are part of Record Group (RG) 43: Records of International Conferences, Commission, and Expositions. The records of the FEC are comprised of 240 documents boxes organized in three main parts: 1) records of the FEC;

2) records originating from other sources found in FEC files; and 3) subject files used by the FEC.

The collection is broken down further into the following series:

1. Records of the Far Eastern Advisory Commission, 1945-1946
2. Agenda for Meetings 1-222 and Minutes of Meetings 1-222, 1946-1951
3. Verbatim Transcripts of Meetings 1-222, 1946-1951
4. Numbered Policy Document Series, 1946-1952
5. French, Russian, and Chinese Translations of Minutes and Documents, 1946-1949
6. Records of the Committees
7. Far Eastern Commission Reference Subject Files, 1945-1951
8. Subject File of the Secretariat General, 1945-1952
9. U.S. Delegation Subject Files, 1945-1952

Here are brief descriptions of each series:

Series 1: Records of the Far Eastern Advisory Commission, 1945-46

The beginning of this series contains a list of numbered documents issued by the FEAC, the predecessor organization to the FEC, and the corresponding title. The index to documents is quickly followed by the documents themselves, which were filed numerically. The numbered documents are covered by a brief sheet of typed notes. This sheet also provides document number, date, classification, and a list of enclosures in the upper left-handed corner. This cover sheet also contains the title of the document. The records and minutes of (J) meetings refer to a series of early Far Eastern Commission meetings conducted on board the USS Mt. McKinley en route to Japan in January 1946. Other folders or documents marked with a (J) also refer to this trip. Numbered memorandums in this series were bound together and tabbed: the tabs have been filmed to aid researchers.

Series 2: Agendas for Meeting 1-222 and Minutes of Meetings 1-222, 1946-1951

Within this series both agenda and minutes are ordered in numerical and chronological order. Private agenda sheets were prepared for the secretary general and outlined how the various topics and items would be presented; other agenda sheets were circulated in advance to members of the commission. The approved minutes were bound into five books. The minutes to each meeting are covered by a sheet containing the number of the meeting, its date, location, and those persons present. Each representative's country is listed in parentheses after his name. Files of corrigenda are interfiled with the books of minutes and are also listed sequentially.

Series 3: Verbatim Transcripts of Meetings 1-222, 1946-1951

This series is comprised of verbatim transcripts for each meeting, arranged sequentially. Cover sheets for each meeting list the number of the meeting, date, time, place, and the nations and their representatives present. Verbatim minutes identify the speaker and are complete record of what happened during a particular meeting. For this reason they are listed in greater detail than other similar series.

Series 4: Numbered Policy Document Series, 1946-1952

Numbered policy documents are the officially released papers of the FEC. They were arranged in sequential order and deal with a particular topic, ranging from corrections to the minutes of a specific meeting to the elimination of excessive economic concentration in Japan.

Series 5: French, Russian, and Chinese Translations of Minutes and Documents, 1946-1949

This relatively small series of FEC records is comprised of translations of the minutes of meetings, which were made for the benefit of the French, Russian, and Chinese representatives to the commission. This series also includes translations of selected policy documents requested by these representatives.

Series 6: Records of the Committees

The FEC was divided into eight committees, each tasked with a particular facet of the occupation of Japan. The one exception was the steering committee, which made recommendations on the agenda to be taken up by the full commission. It also made recommendations on topics for study by the other committees and apportioned them accordingly. The records include lists of attendance, summary minutes, official minutes, private agendas, transcripts, reports of subcommittees, terms of reference, and numbered documents. These numbered documents are usually prefaced by a code indicating the committee of origin (e.g., "C1" means that the documents originated from committee 1; "SC" documents originated from the steering committee).

The committees of the FEC were as follows:

Steering Committee

Committee 1: Reparations

Committee 2: Economic and Financial Affairs

Committee 3: Constitutional and Legal Reform

Committee 4: Strengthening of Democratic Tendencies

Committee 5: War Criminals

Committee 6: Aliens in Japan

Committee 7: Disarmament of Japan

Series 7: Far Eastern Commission Reference Subject Files, 1945-1951

The subject files served as the main reference collection of the FEC. This series is the largest within the Records of the Far Eastern Commission. There is, however, a general arrangement to this series into a decimal number system. The decimal file indicates the committee which used the materials; e.g., the files pertaining to fishing industry (2.15) were used by committee 2, which dealt with financial and economic affairs. Within each decimal group the files are usually arranged alphabetically by subject reference materials pertaining to a particular subject; within the general folder breaks there is no internal organization or the records. Types of documents included in this series are newspaper clippings, U.S. government publications (mostly from the Department of State or GHW SCAP; instructions from the latter are also referred to as SCAPINS), and various other source documentation relevant to the topic. The time period of the subject files coincides with that of the FEC (1946-1952), and they deal almost exclusively with internal events in Japan.

Series 8: Subject File on the Secretariat General, 1945-1952

Contents comprise similar types of material as can be found in Series 7, but relate to the Office of the Secretariat General of the Commission.

Series 9: U.S. Delegation Subject Files, 1945-1952

Contents comprise similar types of material as can be found in Series 7, but relate to the U.S. Delegation, policy statements, and views of U.S. government officials.