

Yalta Conference from 1

Berlin, the capital of Germany. Franklin D. Roosevelt did not agree and the decision of the USA Military commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, to head south-east to Dresden, ensured that Soviet Forces would be the first to reach Berlin.

Premier Stalin, insisting that his doctors opposed any long trips, rejected Roosevelt's suggestion to meet on the Mediterranean. He offered, instead, to meet at the Black Sea resort of Yalta, in the Crimea. Each leader had an agenda for the Yalta Conference: Roosevelt asked for Soviet support in the U.S. Pacific War against Japan, specifically invading Japan; Churchill pressed for free elections and democratic governments in Eastern and Central Europe (specifically Poland); and Stalin demanded a Soviet sphere of political influence in Eastern and Central Europe, an essential to the USSR's national security strategy.

Poland was the first item on the Soviet agenda. *Stalin stated that "for the Soviet government, the question of Poland was one of honor and security because Poland had served as a historical corridor for forces attempting to invade Russia."* In addition, *Stalin stated, "regarding history that because the Russians had greatly sinned against Poland, the Soviet government was trying to atone for those sins."* *Stalin concluded that "Poland must be strong and that the Soviet Union is interested in the creation of a mighty, free and independent Poland."* Accordingly, Stalin stipulated that Polish government-in-exile demands were not negotiable: the Soviet Union would keep the territory of eastern Poland they had already annexed in 1939, and Poland was to be compensated for that by extending its Western borders at the expense of Germany. Comporting with his prior statement, Stalin promised free elections in Poland despite the Soviet sponsored provisional government recently installed by him in Polish territories occupied by the Red Army.

Roosevelt wanted the USSR to enter the Pacific War with the Allies. One Soviet precondition for a declaration of war against Japan was an American recognition of Mongolian independence from China, and recognition of Soviet interests in the Manchurian railways and Port Arthur; these were agreed without Chinese representation or consent. Stalin agreed that the Soviet Union would enter the Pacific War three months after the defeat of Germany.

Roosevelt met Stalin's price, hoping the USSR could be dealt with via the United Nations. Later, many Americans considered the agreements of the Yalta Conference were a "sellout", encouraging Soviet expansion of influence to Japan and Asia, and because Stalin eventually violated the agreements in forming the Soviet bloc. Furthermore, the Soviets had agreed to join the United Nations, given the secret understanding of a voting formula with a veto power for permanent members of the Security Council, thus ensuring that each country could block unwanted decisions.

At the time the Red Army had occupied and held much of Eastern Europe with military three times greater than Allied forces in the West. The Declaration of Liberated Europe did little to dispel the sphere of influence agreements that had been incorporated into armistice agreements.

The Big Three ratified previous agreements about the post-war occupation zones for Germany: three zones of occupation, one for each of the three principal Allies: The Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States (France later received one also, when the USA and the UK ceded parts of their zones). Berlin itself, although in the Russian zone, would also be divided into three sectors (and eventually became a Cold War symbol because of the division's realization via the Berlin Wall, built and manned by the Soviet-backed East German government).

Also, the Big Three agreed that all original governments would be restored to the invaded countries (with the exception of the French government, which was regarded as collaborationist; in Romania and Bulgaria, where the Soviets had already liquidated most of the governments; the Polish government-in-exile was also excluded by

Stalin) and that all civilians would be repatriated.

Per James F. Byrnes, "In the fall of 1944 the Soviet Union and Provisional Government of France had entered into a treaty of friendship. It was immediately obvious at Yalta, however, that the treaty and the friendly words exchanged over it by the diplomats had not changed in any degree Marshall Stalin's opinion of the contribution of France to the war. He thought France should play little part in the control of Germany, and stated that Yugoslavia and Poland were more entitled to consideration than France. I cannot forget that in this war France opened the gates to the enemy."**

Major points

Key points of the meeting are as follows:

- There was an agreement that the priority would be the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. After the war Germany would be split into four occupied zones.
- Stalin agreed that France might have a fourth occupation zone in Germany and Austria but it would have to be formed out of the American and British zones.
- Germany would undergo demilitarization and denazification.
- German reparations were partly to be in the form of forced labor. The forced labor was to be used to repair damage Germany inflicted on its victims.
- Creation of a reparation council which would be located in Russia.
- The status of Poland was discussed. It was agreed to reorganize the communist Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland that had been installed by the Soviet Union "on a broader democratic basis."
- The Polish eastern border would follow the Curzon Line, and Poland would receive territorial compensation in the West from Germany.
- Churchill alone pushed for free elections in Poland. The British leader pointed out that UK "could never be content with any solution that did not leave Poland a free and independent state". Stalin pledged to permit free elections in Poland, but eventually never honored his promise.
- Citizens of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia were to be handed over to their respective countries, regardless of their consent.
- Roosevelt obtained a commitment by Stalin to participate in the United Nations.
- Stalin requested that all of the 16 Soviet Socialist Republics would be granted United Nations membership. This was taken into consideration, but 14 republics were denied.
- Stalin agreed to enter the fight against the Empire of Japan within 90 days after the defeat of Germany.
- Nazi war criminals were to be hunted down and brought to justice.
- A "Committee on Dismemberment of Germany" was to be set up. The purpose was to decide whether Germany was to be divided into six nations.

Section of the Report**Addressing Democratic Elections**

The Big Three further agreed that democracies would be established, all liberated European and former Axis satellite countries would hold free elections and that order would be restored. In that regard, they promised to rebuild occupied countries by processes that will allow them "to create democratic institutions of their own choice. This is a principle of the Atlantic Charter -- the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live." The report that resulted stated that the three would assist occupied countries to form interim government that "pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of the Governments responsive to the will of the people and to facilitate where necessary the holding of such elections."

The Declaration contained no mechanisms for the enforcement of its principles. The agreement called on signatories to "consult together on the measures necessary to discharge the joint responsibilities set forth in this declaration." During the Yalta discussions, Molotov inserted language that weakened the implication of enforcement of the declaration.

Regarding Poland, the Yalta report further stated that the provisional government should "be pledged to the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret

ballot." The agreement could not conceal the importance of acceding to pro-Soviet short-term Lublin government control and of eliminating language calling for supervised elections.

According to President Roosevelt, "If we attempt to evade the fact that we placed somewhat more emphasis on the Lublin Poles than on the other two groups from which the new government is to be drawn I feel we will expose ourselves to the charges that we are attempting to go back on the Crimea decision." Roosevelt conceded that the language of Yalta was so vague that the Soviets would be able to "stretch it all the way from Yalta to Washington without every technically breaking it." American government officials such as Harry Hopkins conceded that the Soviet position on the predominance of the Lublin Poles in any provisional government comported with the compromises worked out at Yalta. Scholars believe that the recognition of the Lublin Government by the Western powers meant acceptance of predominant Soviet influence in postwar Poland.

The final agreement stipulated that "the Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland and from Poles abroad." The language of Yalta conceded predominance of the pro-Soviet Lublin Government in a provisional government, albeit a reorganized one.

Aftermath - Poland and the Eastern Bloc

Although suspicious of Stalin, even Churchill believed that, because of Stalin's strong promises and admission of guilt over Poland, that Stalin might keep his word regarding Poland, remarking "Poor Neville Chamberlain believed he could trust Hitler. He was wrong. But I don't think I'm wrong about Stalin."

At the time, over 200,000 troops of the Polish Armed Forces in the West were serving under the high command of the British Army. Many of these men and women were originally from the Kresy region of eastern Poland including cities such as Lwów and Wilno. They had been deported from Kresy to the Russian Gulags when Hitler and Stalin occupied Poland in 1939 in accordance with the Nazi-Soviet Pact. When two years later Churchill and Stalin formed an alliance against Hitler, the Kresy Poles were released from the Gulags in Siberia, formed the Anders Army and marched to Persia to create the II Corps (Poland) under British high command.

These Polish troops were instrumental to the Allied defeat of the Germans in North Africa and Italy, and hoped to return to their homes in Kresy in an independent and democratic Poland at the end of the War. But at Yalta, Churchill agreed that Stalin should keep the Soviet gains Hitler agreed to in the Nazi-Soviet Pact, including Kresy, and carry out Polish population transfers (1944-1946). Consequently, Churchill had agreed that tens of thousands of veteran Polish troops under British command should lose their Kresy homes to the Soviet Union. In reaction, thirty officers and men from the II Corps (Poland) committed suicide.

Churchill defended his actions at Yalta in a three-day Parliamentary debate starting February 27, 1945, which ended in a vote of confidence. During the debate, many MPs openly criticised Churchill and passionately voiced loyalty to Britain's Polish allies and expressed deep reservations about Yalta. Moreover, 25 of these MPs risked their careers to draft an amendment protesting against Britain's tacit acceptance of Poland's domination by the Soviet Union. These members included: Arthur Greenwood; Sir Archibald Southby, 1st Baronet; Sir Alec Douglas-Home; James Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby, 3rd Earl of Ancaster and Victor Raikes.[12] After the failure of the amendment, Henry Strauss, 1st Baron Conesford, the Member of Parliament for Norwich, resigned his seat in protest at the British treatment of Poland.

When the Second World War ended, a Communist government was installed in Poland. Most Poles felt betrayed by their wartime allies. Many Polish soldiers refused to return to Poland, because of the Soviet repressions of Polish citizens (1939-1946),

the Trial of the Sixteen and other executions of pro-democracy Poles, particularly the former members of the AK (Armia Krajowa). The result was the Polish Resettlement Act 1947, Britain's first mass immigration law.

The Western Powers soon realized that Stalin would not honor his free elections promise regarding Poland. After receiving considerable criticism in London following Yalta regarding the atrocities committed in Poland by Soviet troops, Churchill wrote Roosevelt a desperate letter referencing the wholesale deportations and liquidations of opposition Poles by the Soviets. Roosevelt, however, maintained his confidence in Stalin, reasoning that Stalin's early priesthood training had "entered into his nature of the way in which a Christian gentleman should behave." On March 1, Roosevelt assured Congress that "I come from the Crimea with a firm belief that we have made a start on the road to a world of peace." By March 21, Roosevelt's Ambassador to the USSR Averill Harriman cabled Roosevelt that "we must come clearly to realize that the Soviet program is the establishment of totalitarianism, ending personal liberty and democracy as we know it." Two days later, Roosevelt began to admit that his view of Stalin had been excessively optimistic and that "Averill is right."

Four days later, on March 27, the Soviet NKVD arrested 16 Polish opposition political leaders that had been invited to participate in provisional government negotiations. The arrests were part of a trick employed by the NKVD, which flew the leaders to Moscow for a later show trial followed by sentencing to a gulag. Churchill thereafter argued to Roosevelt that it was "as plain as a pike staff that Moscow's tactics were to drag out the period for holding free elections while the Lublin Committee consolidates their power." The fraudulent Polish elections, held in January 16, 1947 resulted in Poland's official transformation to undemocratic communist state by 1949.

Following Yalta, in Moscow, when Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov expressed worry that the Yalta Agreement's wording might impede Stalin's plans, Stalin responded "Never mind. We'll do it our own way later." While the Soviet Union had already annexed several occupied countries as (or into) Soviet Socialist Republics, other countries in eastern Europe that it occupied were converted into Soviet-controlled satellite states, such as the People's Republic of Poland, the People's Republic of Hungary, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the People's Republic of Romania, the People's Republic of Albania, and later East Germany from the Soviet zone of German occupation. Eventually the United States and the United Kingdom made concessions in recognizing the then Communist-dominated regions, sacrificing the substance of the Yalta Declaration, while it remained in form.

Four months after the death of Roosevelt, President Harry S. Truman ordered the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, which was 88 days after the Soviet Union had agreed to enter the Pacific War within 90 days.

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