

# Yalta

Stokes

*The conference held in February 1945 at Yalta, which is in the Crimea on the Black Sea, was the second of three meetings among the leaders of the main allies against Hitler in World War II. Joseph Stalin, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt met in December 1943 in Teheran, where they worked out the basic agreements that led to a successful conclusion of the war. They met a second time at Yalta and then again in July 1945 at Potsdam (Germany), with the substitution of Harry Truman for the deceased Roosevelt and Clement Attlee for Churchill, whose Conservative party had lost to Labour in the 1945 elections. Of the three, the meeting at Yalta is the best remembered because shortly afterward the wartime alliance began its inevitable breakup and the cold war began. For this reason, and because some thought crucial decisions were (or were not) made there, Yalta became the paradigmatic moment for many East Europeans. For them "Yalta" was shorthand for abandonment by the West, domination by the Soviet Union, interruption of their Europocentric histories, and inclusion in an economic straitjacket.*

*The two most important goals of the United States at Yalta were to get the Soviets into the war against Japan—as the atomic bomb had not yet been proved and many casualties were expected if Japan had to be invaded—and to obtain Soviet approval for the United Nations, which Roosevelt saw as essential to the preservation of peace in the postwar world. In both of these matters, Roosevelt was successful, as the text of the documents reprinted here shows. For East Europeans, however, and for the many critics of Yalta for years afterward, the most important issues were Churchill's and Roosevelt's acquiescence to a unified Polish government dominated by communists, which sealed the fate of that country, and the Declaration on Liberated Europe, by which the State Department attempted to ensure democratic elections in Eastern Europe after the war.*

*In the light of the feelings aroused by these issues, it is instructive to read the exchange between Charles E. Bohlen and the U.S. minister counselor to the Soviet Union, George Kennan, contained in Bohlen's description of the conference excerpted in Document 2. Bohlen acted as Roosevelt's interpreter at Yalta and as an adviser to the American delegation.*

# 1

## Report of the Crimea Conference (Yalta)

February 11, 1945

The following statement is made by the prime minister of Great Britain, the president of the United States of America, and the chairman of the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the results of the Crimean Conference:

### I THE DEFEAT OF GERMANY

We have considered and determined the military plans of the three Allied powers for the final defeat of the common enemy. The military staffs of the three Allied nations have met in daily meetings throughout the conference. These meetings have been most satisfactory from every point of view and have resulted in closer coordination of the military effort of the three Allies than ever before. The fullest information has been interchanged. The timing, scope, and coordination of new and even more powerful blows to be launched by our armies and air forces into the heart of Germany from the east, west, north, and south have been fully agreed and planned in detail.

Our combined military plans will be made known only as we execute them, but we believe that the very close working partnership among the three staffs attained at this conference will result in shortening the war. Meetings of the three staffs will be continued in the future whenever the need arises.

Nazi Germany is doomed. The German people will only make the cost of their defeat heavier to themselves by attempting to continue a hopeless resistance.

### II THE OCCUPATION AND CONTROL OF GERMANY

We have agreed on common policies and plans for enforcing the unconditional surrender terms which we shall impose together on Nazi Germany after German armed resistance has been finally crushed. These terms will not be made known

Reprinted from *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955).

To foster the conditions in which the liberated peoples may exercise these rights, the three governments will jointly assist the people in any European liberated state or former Axis satellite state in Europe where in their judgment conditions require (1) to establish conditions of internal peace, (2) to carry out emergency measures for the relief of distressed people, (3) to form interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people, and (4) to facilitate where necessary the holding of such elections.

The three governments will consult the other United Nations and provisional authorities or other governments in Europe when matters of direct interest to them are under consideration.

When, in the opinion of the three governments, conditions in any European liberated state or any former Axis satellite state in Europe make such action necessary, they will immediately consult together on the measures necessary to discharge the joint responsibilities set forth in this declaration.

By this declaration we reaffirm our faith in the principles of the Atlantic Charter, our pledge in the Declaration by the United Nations, and our determination to build in cooperation with other peace-loving nations a world order under law, dedicated to peace, security, freedom, and the general well-being of all mankind.

In issuing this declaration, the three powers express the hope that the provisional government of the French republic may be associated with them in the procedure suggested.

## VI POLAND

We came to the Crimea Conference resolved to settle our differences about Poland. We discussed fully all aspects of the question. We reaffirm our common desire to see established a strong, free, independent and democratic Poland. As a result of our discussions we have agreed on the conditions in which a new Polish provisional government of national unity may be formed in such a manner as to command recognition by the three major powers.

The agreement reached is as follows:

A new situation has been created in Poland as a result of her complete liberation by the Red Army. This calls for the establishment of a Polish provisional government which can be more broadly based than was possible before the recent liberation of western Poland. 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 itself and from Poles abroad. This new government should then be called the Polish provisional government of national unity.

M. Molotov, Mr. Harriman, and Sir A. Clark Kerr are authorized as a commission to consult in the first instance in Moscow with members of the present provisional government and with other Polish democratic leaders from within Poland and

from abroad, with a view to the reorganization of the present government along the above lines. This Polish provisional government of national unity shall be pledged to the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot. In these elections all democratic and anti-Nazi parties shall have the right to take part and to put forward candidates.

When a Polish provisional government of national unity has been properly formed in conformity with the above, the government of the U.S.S.R., which now maintains diplomatic relations with the present provisional government of Poland, and the government of the United Kingdom and the government of the United States will establish diplomatic relations with the new Polish provisional government of national unity, and will exchange ambassadors by whose reports the respective governments will be kept informed about the situation in Poland.

The three heads of government consider that the eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon line with digressions from it in some regions of five to eight kilometers in favor of Poland.<sup>3</sup> They recognize that Poland must receive substantial accessions of territory in the north and west. They feel that the opinion of the new Polish provisional government of national unity should be sought in due course on the extent of these accessions and that the final delimitation of the western frontier of Poland should thereafter await the peace conference.

## VII YUGOSLAVIA

We have agreed to recommend to Marshal Tito and Dr. Subasic that the agreement between them should be put into effect immediately and that a new government should be formed on the basis of that agreement.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Early in February 1919 the Supreme Allied Council appointed a commission to report on possible border solutions between Poland and Germany following World War I, and this commission went on to propose a tentative border between Russia and Poland. When the Soviets invaded Poland in 1920, the British prime minister directed his secretary of state for foreign affairs, Lord Curzon, to ask the Soviets to stop at this line, pending the convocation of a Russo-Polish peace conference. Before transmitting the message to the Soviets, the Foreign Office, perhaps under the influence of Lewis Namier, who later became a famous historian and was then on war duty in the Foreign Office, changed the original line to place Lvov in Soviet territory, a point that became important in World War II. Neither the Soviets nor the Poles accepted the proposal, and the Peace of Riga of 1921 established the Polish border far to the east of the Curzon line. In 1939 the Soviet Union seized eastern Poland to a point just beyond the Curzon line as part of its agreement with Hitler, and Stalin made retaining that territory one of his primary war aims. His suggestion at Teheran to accept the Curzon line as the eastern border of postwar Poland and to compensate the Poles with lands taken from eastern Germany by pushing the Polish border westward to the Oder and Neisse rivers was finally agreed to at Yalta, with minor modifications.

<sup>4</sup>In June 1944 Ivan Šubašić, representing the royal Yugoslav government in exile, and Josip Broz Tito, leader of the Yugoslav partisans (communists), agreed, both under pressure from Churchill, to establish a coalition government after the war. Šubašić became foreign minister, and a three-man regency was established until Yugoslavia's postwar system of government could be determined. In 1945, however, with the means of force entirely in their hands, the communists suppressed all other political movements, so that the Yugoslav constitution of November 29, 1945, established a party state on Stalinist principles.

We also recommend that as soon as the new government has been formed, it should declare that

1. The Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation (AVNOJ) should be extended to include members of the last Yugoslav parliament (Skupschina) who have not compromised themselves by collaboration with the enemy, thus forming a body to be known as a temporary parliament; and
2. Legislative acts passed by the Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation (AVNOJ) will be subject to subsequent ratification by a Constituent Assembly.

There was also a general review of other Balkan question[s].

## VIII

### MEETINGS OF FOREIGN SECRETARIES

Throughout the conference, besides the daily meetings of the heads of governments and the foreign secretaries, separate meetings of the three foreign secretaries, and their advisers have also been held daily.

These meetings have proved of the utmost value, and the conference agreed that permanent machinery should be set up for regular consultation between the three foreign secretaries. They will, therefore, meet as often as may be necessary, probably about every three or four months. These meetings will be held in rotation in the three capitals, the first meeting being held in London, after the United Nations conference on world organization.

## IX

### UNITY FOR PEACE AS FOR WAR

Our meeting here in the Crimea has reaffirmed our common determination to maintain and strengthen in the peace to come that unity of purpose and of action which has made victory possible and certain for the United Nations in this war. We believe that this is a sacred obligation which our governments owe to our peoples and to all the peoples of the world.

Only with continuing and growing cooperation and understanding among our three countries and among all the peace-loving nations can the highest aspiration of humanity be realized—a secure and lasting peace which will, in the words of the Atlantic Charter, “afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.”

Victory in this war and establishment of the proposed international organization will provide the greatest opportunity in all history to create in the years to come the essential conditions of such a peace.

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL  
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
JOSEPH STALIN

## 2

### The Yalta Negotiations

Charles E. Bohlen

February 1945

We took off from Malta in the middle of the night. Although we had no fighter escort, we flew over Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania, all of which were occupied in part by Axis troops. We landed about noon at an airfield at Saki which had been hurriedly repaired. Churchill arrived twenty minutes after the president [Franklin D. Roosevelt].

After being welcomed by a greeting party, headed by Molotov, we were offered refreshments, including vodka and champagne, caviar, smoked sturgeon, and black bread. The eighty-mile drive over the mountains to Yalta was made under lowering clouds that spat rain and a little wet snow. The road was lined with troops of at least two Soviet divisions, each soldier standing within sight of the next, for the entire eighty miles. As the presidential car passed (I was in the second car with Stettinius), the soldiers, many of them girls, snapped to the Russian salute—an abrupt move of the arm to put the rifle at a thirty-degree angle from the body. Repeated thousands of times, the salute was impressive. The drive took about five hours. Although the country was mostly uninhabited, we saw signs of destruction—gutted buildings and burned-out Nazi tanks. I believe that the wreckage Roosevelt saw on the drive hardened his view on Germany. “I’m more bloodthirsty than a year ago,” he told Stalin when they met.

We arrived at Yalta about 6 P.M. It was already dark, and we were immediately shown to our accommodations in the white granite Livadiya Palace, which had been the summer home of the czars.

At 11 A.M. [the next day], there was a meeting of the top members of the American staff. After the president, who looked much better than at Malta, had said a few suitable words, there was a general discussion of the agenda for the conference.<sup>1</sup> Not much of substance was taken up. Realizing that we were in for

<sup>1</sup>On February 2, 1945, en route to Yalta, Roosevelt stopped off at Malta and met briefly with Churchill. Both attended a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, which had been in session for some days, but Roosevelt avoided political discussions, so that the meeting had little impact on overcoming the almost complete lack of planning for the Yalta talks.

Reprinted from *Witness to History, 1929–1969*, pp. 173–201, by Charles E. Bohlen, by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright © 1973 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.