



CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AT
YALTA**

TOUCH TO BEGIN



CONFRONT THE ISSUE


FDR AT YALTA

Scroll down to view
select documents
from the FDR Library
and excerpts from
the historical debate.

After the war, the Yalta Conference became the subject of sharp controversy and debate. As the Cold War descended over Europe, critics argued FDR “gave away” Eastern Europe at the conference. Demagogues like Senator Joseph McCarthy went further, charging the agreements the President made at Yalta were treasonous. Others speculated that Roosevelt’s ill health impaired his judgment at the Conference.

Over the ensuing decades historians have continued to explore and debate FDR’s actions at Yalta. Scholars have refuted the most reckless charges made by Roosevelt’s critics, including the argument that he was mentally impaired at the conference. By early 1945 FDR was ill and incapable of working effectively for long hours. But his condition did not affect how he conducted diplomacy at Yalta.

A more balanced view of the conference has emerged over time. The President’s defenders point out that it was the Soviet Union—not the West—which violated the agreements reached at Yalta. They also argue that critics overlook the pressing need to preserve the fragile Allied coalition in the midst of the war, the American military’s strong desire to ensure Soviet participation in the planned invasion of Japan (which was expected to be very costly), and the dominant position of the Red Army on the ground in Eastern Europe in early 1945. These factors placed real limits on FDR and Churchill. In the end they compromised with the Soviets, maintained the allied coalition, and struggled to establish a framework for postwar cooperation.



CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

After the war, the Yalta Conference became the subject of sharp controversy and debate. As the Cold War descended over Europe, critics argued FDR "gave away" Eastern Europe at the conference.

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Start Over



CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

FDR's Cable to Winston Churchill Regarding a Conference Meeting Place December 23, 1944

Following the successful Normandy landings in June 1944, President Roosevelt pressed Stalin for another face-to-face meeting. But with Soviet armies now retaking vast Eastern European territories from the Nazis, Stalin was in no hurry to meet with his Allies. Pleading health concerns and fearful of leaving the security of Soviet territory, Stalin rejected meeting locations in the Mediterranean that were more convenient for FDR and Churchill. In this December cable, the President agreed to meet in the Soviet Union. The location was a small town on the Crimean peninsula—a nearly 14,000 mile round trip for the President by ship, airplane, and automobile. The conference was codenamed “Argonaut” to reflect the journey’s epic nature.

Map Room Papers; Argonaut (1), Section (1), Box 21

~~TOP SECRET~~
PRIORITY

23 DECEMBER 1944

FROM: OPNAV
TO : ALUSNA, LONDON

231547 NCR 1078

COPY

NUMBER 676, PERSONAL AND ~~TOP SECRET~~, FROM THE PRESIDENT FOR THE
PRIME MINISTER.

I am today sending to Harriman the following message in regard to
our projected three party meeting with U.J.

Please let me have your opinion as to the possibilities of this
plan from your point of view.

QUOTE. If Stalin cannot manage to meet us in the Mediterranean
I am prepared to go to the Crimea and have the meeting at Yalta which
appears to be the best place available in the Black Sea having the best
accommodations ashore and the most promising flying conditions.

We would arrive by plane from some Mediterranean port and would
send in advance a naval vessel to Sevastopol to provide necessary service
and living accommodations if it should be necessary for me to live on board
ship.

I would plan to leave America very soon after the inauguration on a
naval vessel. You will be informed later of a date of arrival that will be
satisfactory to Churchill and to me. My party will be numerically equal to
that which was present at Teheran, about 35 total.

I still hope the military situation will permit Marshal Stalin to meet
us half way. UNQUOTE.

ROOSEVELT

DECLASSIFIED
By Deputy Assistant of the U.S.

By W. J. Stewart Date MAR 29 1972

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COPY

~~TOP SECRET~~

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

State Department Briefing Memorandum for the President January 18, 1945

The issues to be resolved at Yalta were many. In particular, FDR wanted to guarantee the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan and its participation in the postwar United Nations organization. But other issues also loomed as the American delegation prepared to depart for the conference. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr., submitted to the President a series of briefing papers with this cover memorandum listing additional complex diplomatic decisions to be made by the Big Three. These decisions would shape the postwar world for decades to come.

President's Secretary's Files; Subject Files; Crimea Conference; Box 129



sup file PSF: Crimea Conf folder 3-45
~~TOP SECRET~~
file confidential

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 18, 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Political matters for discussion
at the forthcoming meeting

For your convenience I am attaching hereto an extra copy of the memorandum that I left with you in the black binder this morning covering the ten points which the State Department hopes can be satisfactorily dealt with in the forthcoming discussions.

~~SECRET~~

Political Matters for Discussion
at the Forthcoming Meeting

1. Soviet-British agreement to compromise on the voting procedure of the Security Council along the lines of the United States proposal.
2. Soviet-British agreement to the proposed establishment of an emergency European high commission composed of the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and France.
3. Soviet participation in working out a common allied political program for liberated Europe on the basis of which the emergency high commission would operate.
4. Soviet-British agreement to the short term and long term political and economic treatment of Germany as outlined in the United States proposals.
5. Soviet agreement to a solution of the Polish problem which would insure the emergence of a free, independent, and democratic Poland. For this purpose pending elections in Poland the establishment of an interim government which would be broadly representative of the Polish people and acceptable to all the major allies.
6. Soviet agreement to permit UNRRA to carry out its functions of distribution and supervision of relief supplies in areas liberated by the Soviet Armies.
7. Soviet agreement to a clarification of the status and responsibilities of the United States representation on the Allied Control Commissions in former enemy countries which have surrendered to the Soviet Armies.
8. Soviet agreement, in accordance with the spirit of the Declaration on Iran of December 1, 1943, to respect the decision of the Iranian Government to postpone negotiations

with foreign powers or companies regarding oil concessions until the termination of hostilities and the withdrawal of allied troops now on Iranian soil.

9. Soviet-British agreement to the desirability and the common interest of bringing about the maximum degree of unity in China and for this purpose Soviet undertaking to use their influence with the Chinese Communists to further an agreement between the national Government and the Chinese Communists along the lines of General Hurley's efforts.
10. A common policy between the three countries in regard to the question of the rearming of the Western European democracies in the postwar period.

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

Memorandum of Conversation of FDR and Stalin's First Meeting at Yalta February 4, 1945

In recognition of FDR's physical limitations and his status as a head of state, all of the sessions of the Big Three leaders took place at the Tsarist-era palace that served as Roosevelt's headquarters at Yalta. Just before the opening session, Stalin paid his respects to the President at Livadia Palace—their first face-to-face meeting since the Teheran Conference in December 1943. Roosevelt used this meeting to try to gain Stalin's personal trust for the talks ahead. In this memorandum of their conversation, FDR expresses his anger at German barbarism, belittles Free French leader Charles de Gaulle, and previews the discussions that would take place about a British proposal for a French zone of occupation in a defeated Germany.

Map Room Papers; Crimean Conference; Box 29

Printed FRUS, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 570-
573]

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION - YALTA CONFERENCE:

Present: The President
Mr. Bohlen
Marshal Stalin
Mr. Molotov
Mr. Pavlov

Date: February 4, 1945
Time: 4:00 P.M.
Place: Livadia Palace, Yalta

Subject: General Discussion

~~TOP SECRET~~

February 4, 1945

After an exchange of amenities, in which The President thanked Marshal Stalin for all the successful efforts that had been made for his comfort and convenience, The President said that the military situation was considerably improved since they had last met.

MARSHAL STALIN replied that this was certainly true, and that the Soviet armies were moving very successfully onto the line of the Oder.

THE PRESIDENT replied that he had made a number of bets on board the cruiser coming over as to whether the Russians would get to Berlin before the Americans would get to Manila.

MARSHAL STALIN remarked that he was certain the Americans would get to Manila before the Russians got to Berlin, since there was at present very hard fighting going on for the Oder line.

There followed a discussion about the climate and characteristics of the Crimea.

THE PRESIDENT said that he had been very much struck by the extent of German destruction in the Crimea and therefore he was more bloodthirsty in regard to the Germans than he had been a year ago, and he hoped that Marshal Stalin would again propose a toast to the execution of 50,000 officers of the German Army.

MARSHAL STALIN replied that because of the honest blood shed in fighting the Germans, everyone was more bloodthirsty than they had been a year ago, adding that the destruction in the Crimea is nothing compared to that which occurred in the Ukraine. He said in the Crimea the Germans had been out-flanked and had had little time to carry out planned destruction, whereas in the Ukraine they had done it with method and calculation. He said the Germans were savages and seemed to hate with a sadistic hatred the creative work of human beings.

THE PRESIDENT agreed with this.

MARSHAL STALIN then inquired about the military situation on the Western Front.

THE PRESIDENT

February 4, 1945

THE PRESIDENT replied that General Marshall, at the five o'clock meeting, would give a detailed outline of the situation and plans, but he could say now that there was an offensive planned for the 8th of February and another on the 12th, but that the main blow of the Anglo-American armies on the Western Front would take place in March.

MARSHAL STALIN expressed gratification at this news, and said that General Antonov of the Soviet General Staff would give a detailed review of the situation on the Eastern Front at the five o'clock meeting. He added that if it were possible to capture the Ruhr and Saar regions the Germans would be deprived of all sources of coal, since the Russians had already captured the Silesia basin.

THE PRESIDENT said he felt that the armies were getting close enough to have contact between and he hoped General Eisenhower could communicate directly with the Soviet Staff rather than through the Chiefs of Staff in London and Washington as in the past.

MARSHAL STALIN agreed and thought it was very important and promised that the staffs while here would work out the details of this suggestion. He added that if the Germans were deprived of all their coal, since they were already short of bread, there was a possibility that the German collapse would come before absolute military defeat.

THE PRESIDENT inquired whether the Soviet bridgeheads across the Oder were sufficient for further offensive action.

MARSHAL STALIN replied that in regard to these bridgeheads, of which there were five or six, fierce battles were in progress on the Eastern front.

THE PRESIDENT said that one of the difficulties on the Western Front was that we had no secure bridgeheads and that on the upper Rhine the current was so strong with floating ice that it made it very difficult for pontoon operations, but that General Eisenhower felt once he reached the Rhine he would be able to

cross

February 4, 1945

cross it, but he did not expect this before March. He added that the British had wanted to make a major crossing of the Rhine on the north sector in Holland, but since we had four times the number of men in France that the British had we felt we were entitled to have an alternative, which would be either through Holland or in the region of Mainz.

THE PRESIDENT then inquired how Marshal Stalin had gotten along with General de Gaulle.

MARSHAL STALIN replied that he had not found de Gaulle a very complicated person, but he felt he was unrealistic in the sense that France had not done very much fighting in this war and de Gaulle demanded full rights with the Americans, British and Russians who had done the burden of the fighting.

THE PRESIDENT then described his conversation with de Gaulle in Casablanca two years ago when de Gaulle compared himself with Joan of Arc as the spiritual leader of France and with Clemenceau as the political leader.

MARSHAL STALIN replied that de Gaulle does not seem to understand the situation in France and that in actual fact the French contribution at the present time to military operations on the Western Front was very small and that in 1940 they had not fought at all.

THE PRESIDENT replied that he recently decided to arm eight new French divisions composed of Frenchmen who had had previous military training.

MARSHAL STALIN said that was good insofar as it would help the American armies but at present he felt the de Gaulle army was very weak.

THE PRESIDENT said he had recently heard that the French Government did not plan to annex outright any German territory but they are willing to have it placed under international control.

MARSHAL STALIN

February 4, 1945

MARSHAL STALIN replied that was not the story de Gaulle had told in Moscow--there he said the Rhine was the natural boundary of France and he wished to have French troops placed there in permanency.

THE PRESIDENT said he would now tell the Marshal something indiscreet, since he would not wish to say it in front of Prime Minister Churchill, namely that the British for two years have had the idea of artificially building up France into a strong power which would have 200,000 troops on the eastern border of France to hold the line for the period required to assemble a strong British army. He said the British were a peculiar people and wished to have their cake and eat it too.

THE PRESIDENT then said that he understood the tripartite zones in regard to occupation of Germany were already agreed upon, to which Marshal Stalin appeared to agree, but he went on to say that one outstanding question was that of a French zone of occupation. The President said he had had a good deal of trouble with the British in regard to zones of occupation. He said that he would of preferred to have the northwest zone which would be independent of communications through France, but the British seemed to think that the Americans should restore order in France and then return political control to the British.

MARSHAL STALIN inquired whether The President thought France should have a zone of occupation, and for what reason.

THE PRESIDENT said he thought it was not a bad idea, but he added that it was only out of kindness.

Both MARSHAL STALIN and MR. MOLOTOV spoke up vigorously and said that would be the only reason to give France a zone. Marshal Stalin said that question would have to be considered further here at Yalta.

As it was then three minutes to five, The President suggested that they proceed to the conference room where the military staffs were gathered.

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

FDR's Letter to Stalin Regarding Poland February 6, 1945

Poland was the agenda topic at a tense conference session on February 6, 1945. Every possible geopolitical problem was wrapped up in the subject of Poland: the relationship between large and small nations, the hope for a world peace organization versus the reality of great power spheres of influence, and the legitimacy of wartime territorial acquisitions. The Big Three came to Yalta recognizing two different Polish governments: the British and Americans recognized a democratic government-in-exile based in London. Stalin recognized the so-called Lublin Poles installed by the Soviets as the provisional Polish government. Following their contentious February 6th meeting, FDR personally wrote to Stalin searching for a resolution that could satisfy both sides in the creation of a new democratically elected Polish government.

Map Room Papers; Crimean Conference; Box 29

[Printed 727-728]

Attachment to Notes, Fourth Formal Meeting of Crimean Conference,

4 P.M., February 7, 1945

February 6, 1945.

My dear Marshal Stalin:

I have been giving a great deal of thought to our meeting this afternoon, and I want to tell you in all frankness what is on my mind.

In so far as the Polish Government is concerned, I am greatly disturbed that the three great powers do not have a meeting of minds about the political setup in Poland. It seems to me that it puts all of us in a bad light throughout the world to have you recognizing one government while we and the British are recognizing another in London. I am sure this state of affairs should not continue and that if it does it can only lead our people to think there is a breach between us, which is not the case. I am determined that there shall be no breach between ourselves and the Soviet Union. Surely there is a way to reconcile our differences.

I was very much impressed with some of the things you said today, particularly your determination that your rear must be safeguarded as your army moves into Berlin. You cannot, and we must not, tolerate any temporary government which will give your armed forces any trouble of this sort. I want you to know that I am fully mindful of this.

You must believe me when I tell you that our people at home look with a critical eye on what they consider a disagreement between us at this vital stage of the war. They, in effect, say that if we cannot get a meeting of minds now when our armies are converging on the common enemy, how can we get an understanding on even more vital things in the future.

I have had to make it clear to you that we cannot recognize the Lublin Government as now composed, and the world would regard it as a lamentable outcome of our work here if we parted with an open

an obvious

Marshal V. I. Stalin,

Koreis,

The Crimea.

and obvious divergence between us on this issue.

You said today that you would be prepared to support any suggestions for the solution of this problem which offered a fair chance of success, and you also mentioned the possibility of bringing some members of the Lublin government here.

Realizing that we all have the same anxiety in getting this matter settled, I would like to develop your proposal a little and suggest that we invite here to Yalta at once Mr. Beirut and Mr. Osubka Morawski from the Lublin government and also two or three from the following list of Poles, which according to our information would be desirable as representatives of the other elements of the Polish people in the development of a new temporary government which all three of us could recognize and support: Bishop Sapieha of Cracow, Vincente Witos, Mr. Zurlowski, Professor Buyak, and Professor Kutzeba. If, as a result of the presence of these Polish leaders here, we could jointly agree with them on a provisional government in Poland which should no doubt include some Polish leaders from abroad such as Mr. Mikolajczyk, Mr. Grabski and Mr. Romer, the United States Government, and I feel sure the British Government as well, would then be prepared to examine with you conditions in which they would dissociate themselves from the London government and transfer their recognition to the new provisional government.

I hope I do not have to assure you that the United States will never lend its support in any way to any provisional government in Poland that would be inimical to your interests.

It goes without saying that any interim government which could be formed as a result of our conference with the Poles here would be pledged to the holding of free elections in Poland at the earliest possible date. I know this is completely consistent with your desire to see a new free and democratic Poland emerge from the welter of this war.

Most sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (Signed)


CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

Soviet Proposals in Response to FDR's February 6th Letter on Poland February 7, 1945

For domestic political reasons, FDR and Churchill sought to include at least some representation by the London Poles in a new Polish government. Fearful of another future German invasion of the Soviet Union, Stalin insisted on a Polish government loyal to the Soviets. The reality of Soviet Red Army troops now occupying Poland weakened Roosevelt and Churchill's bargaining position. As part of the negotiations, Stalin claimed large amounts of eastern Poland as Soviet territory (a claim agreed to previously by the Big Three at Teheran). This moved the Soviet border some 200 miles closer to Germany. In exchange, Poland was expanded north and westward into Germany—a move that would weaken a future German state and make any Polish government more reliant on the Soviet Union for protection.

Map Room Papers; Crimean Conference; Box 29


2. Soviet proposals in reply to the President's letter, submitted to the Conference by Mr. Molotov on February 7, 1945.

"1. It was agreed that the line of Curzon should be the Eastern frontier of Poland with a digression from it in some regions of 5-8 kilometers in favor of Poland.

"2. It was decided that the Western frontier of Poland should be traced from the town of Stettin (Polish) and farther to the South along the River Oder and still farther along the River Neisse (Western).

"3. It was deemed desirable to add to the Provisional Polish Government some democratic leaders from Polish emigré circles and from inside Poland.

"4. It was regarded desirable that the enlarged Provisional Polish Government should be recognized by the Allied Governments.

"5. It was deemed desirable that the Provisional Polish Government, enlarged as was mentioned above in paragraph 3, should as soon as possible call the population of Poland to the polls for organization by general voting of permanent organs of the Polish Government.

"6. V. M. Molotov, Mr. Harriman and Sir Archibald Clark Kerr were entrusted with the discussion of the question of enlarging the Provisional Polish Government and submitting their proposals to the consideration of the three Governments."

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

Declaration on Poland February 10, 1945

Having unsuccessfully lobbied Stalin for the creation of a democratically elected Polish government based on the London government-in-exile, Roosevelt and Churchill still needed a solution that would be politically acceptable back home. For Churchill, the issue of Poland was a matter of British honor—Britain had entered the war in 1939 in defense of Poland. For Roosevelt, the legitimacy of a postwar United Nations organization would be called into question without a satisfactory resolution of the Polish government problem. Ultimately, the Big Three agreed to this “Declaration on Poland” that papered over their disagreements. Stalin agreed only that the existing Polish government (his Lublin government) would be “reorganized on existing lines” and that “free and unfettered elections” would be held “as soon as possible”—a promise he never kept. Churchill later said that the agreement on Poland was the best that he could get. And when Roosevelt was challenged by an aide on the agreement’s elasticity, FDR responded: “It’s the best I can do for Poland at this time.”

Map Room Papers; Crimean Conference; Box 29

9. Declaration on Poland.

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 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 U.S.A. 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 favour of Poland. It is recognized 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.

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

FDR's Letter to Stalin on United Nations Voting Procedures February 10, 1945

One of Franklin Roosevelt's major goals for the Yalta Conference was to secure the Soviet Union's participation in the postwar United Nations organization. The broad outline of the United Nations had been discussed by the Big Three at Teheran in 1943, and in 1944 an international conference established more specific details of how the body would be organized, including a "one nation, one vote" procedure in the General Assembly. To Stalin, however, the General Assembly seemed packed with British dominions and subservient Latin American nations that could conspire with Britain and the United States against Soviet interests. He insisted that the Soviet Union be given additional votes in the General Assembly. In this letter, FDR agreed to this request, but fearing a political backlash back home, he asks that the United States also be allowed additional votes if needed to ensure acceptance by Congress.

Map Room Papers; Crimean Conference; Box 29

~~SECRET~~

February 10, 1945.

My dear Marshal Stalin:

I have been thinking, as I must, of possible political difficulties which I might encounter in the United States in connection with the number of votes which the Big Powers will enjoy in the Assembly of the World Organization. We have agreed, and I shall certainly carry out that agreement, to support at the forthcoming United Nations Conference the admission of the Ukrainian and White Russian Republics as members of the Assembly of the World Organization. I am somewhat concerned lest it be pointed out that the United States will have only one vote in the Assembly. It may be necessary for me, therefore, if I am to insure whole hearted acceptance by the Congress and people of the United States of our participation in the World Organization, to ask for additional votes in the Assembly in order to give parity to the United States.

I would

Marshal I. V. Stalin,
Koreis, The Crimea.

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By Deputy Archivist of the U.S.


By W. J. Stewart Date NOV 7 1973

- 2 -

I would like to know, before I face this problem, that you would perceive no objection and would support a proposal along this line if it is necessary for me to make it at the forthcoming conference. I would greatly appreciate your letting me have your views in reply to this letter.

Most sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (Signed)


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By W. J. Stewart Date NOV 7 1973

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

Stalin's Reply to FDR's Letter on United Nations Voting Procedures February 11, 1945

The United Nations organization mattered little to Stalin. He believed that world security ultimately depended on deals made between the world's great powers. But given how important the UN was to the Americans, he extracted two additional General Assembly votes for the Soviet Union in exchange for Soviet participation. He also agreed to support Roosevelt's proposal for additional United States votes. For Roosevelt, the agreement for Soviet participation in the United Nations—even with the troublesome additional votes—was a major victory. The President's longtime vision of establishing a postwar world organization to prevent another world war was finally realized. The Big Three agreed that the founding conference of the United Nations would take place in San Francisco on April 25, 1945. FDR planned to attend.

Map Room Papers; Crimean Conference; Box 29

C O P Y

TRANSLATION

I. V. STALIN

Koreiz, February 11, 1945

Dear Mr. Roosevelt:

I have received your letter of February 10. I entirely agree with you that, since the number of votes for the Soviet Union is increased to three in connection with the inclusion of the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet White Russia among the members of the assembly, the number of votes for the USA should also be increased.

I think that the number of votes for the USA might be increased to three as in the case of the Soviet Union and its two basic Republics. If it is necessary I am prepared officially to support this proposal.

With sincere respects

(signed) I. Stalin

President Franklin D. Roosevelt,

Livadia Palace,

Yalta, Crimea

C O P Y

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

Agreement on Soviet Entry into the War against Japan February 11, 1945

A key objective for FDR at the Yalta Conference was to secure the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan. The war in Europe was drawing to an end, but Roosevelt did not know whether the as-yet untested atomic bomb would be ready in time to be used against Japan. U.S. planners feared large American casualties in an invasion of the Japanese home islands. Roosevelt wanted Soviet troops to tie down the Japanese in Manchuria and safeguard American air bases in China. In return, Stalin wanted a pro-Soviet Outer Mongolia and guaranteed access to Chinese ports and railroads critical to the Soviet supply line. He also demanded a resolution to islands whose ownership was contested between Japan and the Soviet Union. Most controversially, the Kurile Islands chain—which had never been fully owned by Russia and was ethnically Japanese—was handed over outright to the Soviet Union. This agreement signed by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin on February 11, 1945 was kept secret from the Chinese government until June and not released publicly until early 1946. Despite the territorial concessions made to Stalin, Roosevelt and his military advisers believed that they had saved “two million Americans” with the agreement.

Map Room Papers; Crimean Conference; Box 29

~~TOP SECRET~~

AGREEMENT

The leaders of the three Great Powers - the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Great Britain - have agreed that in two or three months after Germany has surrendered and the war in Europe has terminated the Soviet Union shall enter into the war against Japan on the side of the Allies on condition that:

1. The status quo in Outer-Mongolia (The Mongolian People's Republic) shall be preserved;

2. The former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored, viz:

(a) the southern part of Sakhalin as well as all the islands adjacent to it shall be returned to the Soviet Union,

(b) the commercial port of Dairen shall be internationalized, the preeminent interests of the Soviet Union in this port being safeguarded and the lease of Port Arthur as a naval base of the USSR restored,

(c) the Chinese-Eastern Railroad and the South-Manchurian Railroad which provides an outlet to Dairen shall be jointly operated by the establishment of a joint Soviet-Chinese Company it being understood that the preeminent interests

of the

of the Soviet Union shall be safeguarded and that China shall retain full sovereignty in Manchuria;

3. The Kuril islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union.

It is understood, that the agreement concerning Outer-Mongolia and the ports and railroads referred to above will require concurrence of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. The President will take measures in order to obtain this concurrence on advice from Marshal Stalin.

The Heads of the three Great Powers have agreed that these claims of the Soviet Union shall be unquestionably fulfilled after Japan has been defeated.

For its part the Soviet Union expresses its readiness to conclude with the National Government of China a pact of friendship and alliance between the USSR and China in order to render assistance to China with its armed forces for the purpose of liberating China from the Japanese yoke.

February 11, 1945

H. G. G. G.
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Winston S. Churchill

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

Excerpt from a Speech by Adolf A. Berle, Jr.

May 26, 1965

Once the Big Three had reached substantial agreement on all the major issues, FDR pushed for a quick conclusion to the Yalta Conference. After the various final documents were signed on February 11, Roosevelt and his delegation quickly departed. FDR left feeling confident that he had achieved his two major objectives: Soviet participation in the United Nations and Soviet entry into the war against Japan. But the agreements that had to be made in order to secure these objectives troubled him privately. When he arrived back at the White House on February 28, one of those there to greet him was longtime adviser and Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, Jr. Years later, Berle recalled his conversation with Roosevelt that day about the conference agreements. “Adolf, I didn’t say the result was good,” said FDR, “I said it was the best I could do.”

Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Papers; Speeches, January-May 1965; Box 155

As it happened, I returned to Washington just after Roosevelt had returned from Yalta, and went to see him. He was ill and tired. He put up both arms and said: "Adolf, I didn't say the result was good. I said it was the best I could do." I put my arm around him and tried to make laughter. He wanted to talk. He explained patiently that he had got the Russians' word for reconstitution of the countries under Russian occupation. There were to be free elections. They were to choose their own governments. True, this was only an agreement. But the Chiefs of Staff were pushing the need of taking American forces out of Europe and deploying to Japan. Since, therefore, we would not push troops into the area, we must rely on the Russian word. Also the Chiefs wanted Russian participation against Japan in the final drive.

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

White House Summary of Public Reaction to the Yalta (Crimean) Conference February 17-18, 1945

Despite FDR's private misgivings, the publicly released results of the Yalta Conference mostly received strong support from the American people, the Congress, and the press—at least initially. For a time, a “spirit of Yalta” seemed to pervade public opinion in the United States and abroad, as shown in this news summary prepared by the White House. But not all of the agreements reached at Yalta were known by the public at the time, including the agreement to give the Soviet Union more United Nations votes and the territorial gains promised to Stalin in exchange for Soviet entry into the war against Japan. The failure to hold truly free elections in Poland also soured public opinion toward the Yalta agreements and vexed Roosevelt's final days. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945, just two weeks before the opening conference of the United Nations.

Official File 4675: World War II: Crimean Conference; Box 35

4675 Crimea
Conf. Falder

FURTHER REACTION TO CRIMEAN CONFERENCE
(February 17-18)

A. U.S.A. Comment

SENATE

Senator Wagner says the Senate is "committed beyond retreat" to a strong, permanent peace organization.

According to AP wire, Senator Vandenberg's friends say he does not want to be bound in advance by any commitment beyond the broad principles laid down at Dumbarton Oaks.

Senator White urging Vandenberg accept appointment said "It would certainly be a blow to hopes for Senatorial approval of a security organization if he should feel he has to decline."

GENERAL

James B. Reston emphasizes that Yalta marks not the culmination of a specific foreign policy so much as the beginning of a decisive phase in the formulation of an American policy. He says the President's task now is to translate the Yalta results into American policy. The "greatest political test of his career" lies just ahead.

Raymond Daniell says "intrinsic evidence" of the Crimea declaration hints at reversal of the program of Tehran and its trend toward power politics and spheres of influence. But says we must await the "putting into practice" to tell whether the Tehran trend has in fact been reversed or merely modified.

New York Times editorial says Crimea charter means United States Government has abandoned "hands off policy which it has pursued since last war and which found its most recent expression in Secretary Stettinius' declarations regarding Italy and Greece.

GERMANY

Army and Navy Journal said General Eisenhower "doubtless" would be Chairman of Central Control Commission for Germany provided in Yalta agreement.

President George N. Shuster of Hunter College criticized results of Crimea conference contending that they pointed to slave labor and the development of "permanent employment for an army and a secret service bent on keeping the German peon in subjugation". (New York Times.)

William L. Shirer (New York Herald Tribune) - "It took Dr. Goebbels' propagandists fifteen hours to recover from the staggering blow that came out of the Crimea last Monday. . . . "The fury of the Nazi desperation . . . was due, not only to the fact that they had prepared their people carefully for something [a "Wilsonian appeal"] which the Big Three were wise enough not to offer them, but also to the terrible realization that the Crimean Conference killed Hitler's last desperate hope of splitting the Allied coalition. . . . The main blast against the Yalta Conference, prepared and issued by D.N.B., degenerated into a hysterical outburst against the Jew. . . . For foreign consumption the Nazi line was that the Yalta decisions were . . . 'basically in accordance with Stalin's wishes'".

MANDATES

Letter to New York Times (Feb. 18) signed by seven distinguished leaders including Sumner Welles, John W. Davis and James T. Shotwell inquires as to British and U.S. policy concerning continuation of "mandates system". Letter asks that the former Japanese mandates not be annexed by U.S., but be governed by U.S. as trustee for the United Nations. It is urged that these questions be considered at San Francisco Conference.

B. Foreign Developments

BRITAIN

London Times (Parliamentary correspondent) says most of the decisions taken by the three Allied leaders have met with general approval, but "there is much questioning and anxiety among conservative members about decisions relating to Poland."

Manchester Guardian - "The more it [Crimea declaration] is studied the better it looks." "Has produced an excellent impression in Parliamentary circles."

Organ of the Polish Peasant Party in London regards Yalta agreements relating to Poland as "bad indeed". Says mutilation of Poland in the east without fixing frontiers in the west and north will be considered as an "undeserved injustice by the Polish nation".

MOSCOW

Harriman reports that Red Star of February 16 refers to press conference of Byrnes in which he emphasized that present Warsaw Government is sole government in Poland and that Provisional Polish Government of National Unity will be formed on its foundations. Red Star says that expansion of Warsaw Government by inclusion in it of democratic elements in Poland and abroad fully corresponds to intentions of that government. It is foreseen that among Mikolajczyk and his supporters many will be found to take part in reorganized government.

FRANCE

Press mixed. Communist Humanite said "the French press is the only free press in the world which did not show unqualified satisfaction at the outcome of the conference".

SWEDEN

Press generally favorable; stress Allied unity and the spirit of compromise in Yalta results.

YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslav Telegraph Service quotes Subasitch that new United Yugoslav Government would "whole-heartedly accept" the decisions of the Crimea Conference.

Patriarch Alexi of Moscow blessed Yalta conference.

VATICAN

Osservatore Romano officially denied Moscow story Vatican had "slightest thought of taking part in that conference".

BUENOS AIRES

Leading press reported "warmly enthusiastic, deliberately anti-fascistic and pro-democratic," in comment on Yalta.

CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AT YALTA

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

It is difficult to believe that a responsible statesman, unattended by his advisers and handicapped by a grave physical disability, could go to so momentous a meeting with two such astute colleagues as Stalin and Churchill without preparation....The formal proposal to hand over eastern Poland—east of the Curzon line—was made by Roosevelt himself. As to western Poland, Stalin already had a government there named by him and composed of Communists representing no one but Stalin himself....To compensate Poland for that half wrung from her by Russia it was agreed to give Poland a part of East Prussia—a totally German land....The conference also decided upon the partition of Germany into three zones, each to be occupied provisionally by the Russian, British and American armies, and to be separately administered. A reparations commission was set up to study the amounts. Russia wanted the amount to be 20 billion dollars of which she would take half. It was agreed that labor might be taken as a possible source of reparations. This was just a diplomatic way of authorizing the seizure of human beings to work as slaves after the war ended and is the basis of that dreadful crime perpetrated after hostilities ceased to which the President of the United States agreed....It is the simple truth to say that Stalin had out-generated Roosevelt at every point. Or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that Roosevelt had out-generated himself. Stalin had merely to sit tight, to make known his wishes and Roosevelt laid them in his lap with eager compliance in the notion that he could thus soften Stalin. It is all the more incredible when we remember that the things he was laying in Stalin's lap were the existence of little nations and the rights of little peoples we had sworn to defend.

John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (The Devin-Adair Company, 1956), 387-389, 394

The Roosevelt Myth

**REVISED
EDITION**

Behind the Roosevelt myth lies a complex personality quite different from the man eulogized in a score of books. There is no one better qualified to demolish this myth in the interest of placing Franklin Roosevelt in proper perspective than Mr. Flynn.

by JOHN T. FLYNN

CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AT
YALTA**

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Cold War-era critics and proponents of the Yalta agreements raised a series of questions that continue to influence today's perception of the end of the Second World War....The end of the Cold War and the opening of the Soviet archives allow one to revisit the old debates. One can now approach these questions with a much better appreciation of what Stalin and his entourage knew about their allies from the vast Soviet intelligence network they maintained in the West, what they thought about their partners, what their geopolitical goals were, how they assessed the results of the negotiations, and whether they intended to honor their obligations....The point on which most American and British observers of Roosevelt's actions at Yalta seem to agree is that despite his obvious fatigue, the president showed complete command of the major issues under discussion. Throughout the conference FDR demonstrated his trademark ability to make alliances, strike deals, and maneuver in order to achieve his main goals. There was no instance at Yalta when he yielded on an important issue spontaneously, in clear violation of his earlier position or without consulting his advisers. And there was a remarkable consistency between Roosevelt's positions at Yalta and in Teheran. He was clearly tired and pressed for the conference's early conclusion, but he did not leave Yalta before his main objectives had been achieved....With the passage of time, Yalta became much more important than its participants intended it to be, both as political reality and as historical mythology. In their minds the conference was in fact only a step on the long road to peace, which is almost always an arduous work in progress.

S.M. Plokhy, Yalta: The Price of Peace (Viking, 2010), 399-400, 402

S. M. PLOKHY

YALTA

THE PRICE OF PEACE



CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AT
YALTA**

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The published announcement at Yalta seemed to herald a new day for Poland and the other liberated nations of Central Europe, then partially or wholly occupied by Soviet troops. The Big Three solemnly agreed to facilitate “free elections” in all of these countries in harmony with the Atlantic Charter....Stalin’s subsequent breaking of his “free-election” pledge proved to be one of the great eye-openers of the postwar era. Roosevelt was accused of having naïvely reposed faith in the word of a dictator who was notoriously untrustworthy, and of thus having sacrificed Poland to Soviet imperialism. The apologists for the President replied that Stalin, with a powerful Red army at his back, was in a position to work his will anyhow. His co-operation in building a better tomorrow was urgently needed, and Roosevelt, with much public support, believed that more was to be gained by trust than distrust. At all events, a pledge was written into the Crimean Charter which, when flagrantly violated by Stalin, strengthened the moral cause of the Western democracies by clearly highlighting Soviet duplicity....Even so, Yalta became a kind of dirty word in American thinking. The stain of secret diplomacy and under-the-table deals would not wash off....As was so often the case in World War II, overconcentration on short-run military victory resulted in a long-run moral defeat. The whole unsavory episode also lent color to the charge that Roosevelt had treacherously permitted Communists to infiltrate the State Department and betray the best interests of the United States. The path was further paved for Senator McCarthy and the anti-Communist hysteria of the 1950’s.

Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (Prentice-Hall, 1980), 764, 766

Thomas A. Bailey

A Diplomatic History
of the American People

Tenth Edition

CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AT
YALTA**

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Much has been made of the idea that Roosevelt was a dying man at Yalta who lacked the physical strength and mental alertness to deal effectively with Stalin. Without question, his physical condition had greatly declined by the time of the Conference....At the same time, however, Roosevelt impressed most observers with the recuperative powers....More important, the men closest to him at Yalta thought the President performed effectively....On all the central issues—the United Nations, Germany, Poland, Eastern Europe, and the Far East—Roosevelt largely followed through on earlier plans, and gained most of what he wished: the world body, the division of Germany, the pronouncement on Poland, and the Declaration on Liberated Europe promised to encourage American involvement abroad and possible long-term accommodation with the U.S.S.R.; similarly, the Far East agreement promised to save American lives and hold China together to play a part in helping the United States preserve postwar peace....In private, Roosevelt was less confident of the results. Adolf Berle, who was very fearful of Russian intentions, saw him just after he returned from Yalta. Roosevelt threw his arms up and said: “Adolf, I didn’t say the result was good. I said it was the best I could do.”...Since he had no intention of confronting Soviet power in east-central Europe, even if he had the troops, Roosevelt’s comments to Berle partly sound like the answer he planned to give anti-Soviet critics if the Yalta settlement collapsed. Nevertheless, the conversation is revealing of FDR’s uncertainty about the ultimate result of the Yalta talks.

*Robert Dallek, Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945
(Oxford University Press, 1979), 519, 521*

**FRANKLIN D.
ROOSEVELT
AND
AMERICAN
FOREIGN
POLICY,
1932-1945**

Robert Dallek

CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AT
YALTA**

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The Yalta conference holds a notorious reputation for those who associate it with the West's "betrayal" or "sell-out" of Eastern Europe. But Yalta should not be viewed as a signal moment of surrender or betrayal that produced the indefensible partition of Europe. It was but another way-station on the course that FDR had long charted where he might apply his strategy of building personal relations in the interests of drawing the Soviets in to his plans for a new postwar world order. When he joined Stalin and Churchill in the former summer palace of the Czars in the Crimean resort city, the die was largely cast. Having invested so much of himself in his effort to woo Stalin, he seemed incapable of contemplating second thoughts or reconsiderations....To the end, he remained trapped by the same hopes and, sadly it must be said, illusions regarding the possibility for genuine cooperation with Stalin that had guided his actions from 1941 onward....The time has come finally to move beyond the Rooseveltian "spell" and to acknowledge honestly the limitations of FDR's efforts in preparing for the postwar world. In response to criticism, Roosevelt's defenders ask bluntly for a better alternative that would have served American interests in the global war still being fought. In this regard, nothing can be definitively proved, but it seems clear that Roosevelt should have pursued a much more measured embrace of Stalin at the outset and to have allowed advisers genuinely knowledgeable about the Soviet Union to guide his outlook as to the possibilities of long-term cooperation with him. The effort should have been less to win Stalin's trust and more to win his respect.

Wilson D. Miscamble, From Roosevelt to Truman: Postdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 61, 80



From Roosevelt to Truman

Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War

WILSON D. MISCAMBLE, C.S.C.

CAMBRIDGE

CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AT
YALTA**

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Where then should be the verdict today on Yalta?...[T]hese were multifaceted negotiations from which each party came away with something. Roosevelt secured his priorities—agreement on the UN and a Soviet pledge to enter the war against Japan. Churchill managed to avoid firm commitments about Poland’s western border, German dismemberment and reparations—the latter to Stalin’s undisguised irritation. The British also secured a larger role for France in postwar Europe than either of their partners wanted. Stalin, for his part, gained acceptance of his main territorial goals in Asia and agreements that seemed to recognize his predominance in Poland. Each of the Big Three left with the belief that the wartime alliance would continue after the war. That indeed had been their major goal for the conference. Building on Teheran in 1943, they hoped to turn summitry into a process....Yalta was not the moment when the big powers crudely divided Europe. Churchill and FDR were still resisting a stark separate-spheres deal of the sort advocated by George Kennan. Nor was Yalta a sellout of Eastern Europe to the Soviets, as claimed by the Republican right: it was already clear that the Soviet Union would be the predominate influence in Eastern Europe....[T]he aftermath of Yalta did play a significant part in the breakdown of the Grand Alliance, engendering a sense of betrayal on both sides. And the interpretations about why that happened shaped the history of summitry. The Soviets harked back to a golden age of cooperation with Roosevelt that was abandoned by his successors. And in America the political sensitivity of the Yalta myths haunted policymakers for decades, deterring them from a parley at the summit to thaw the Cold War.

David Reynolds, Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century (Basic Books, 2007), 158-161

SUMMITS

SIX MEETINGS

THAT SHAPED THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY



DAVID REYNOLDS

CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AT
YALTA**

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The eight-day conference entailed tough, exhausting diplomacy among powerful nations. Such serious efforts to hammer out compromises would be largely abandoned in the Cold War. The Soviets bargained from a strong position. While the Red Army battled 45 miles from Berlin, Allied forces remained on the far side of the Rhine, 250 miles away. With the atom bomb still untested and the United States likely facing heavy casualties in the projected invasion of Japan, the Americans needed the Red Army to tie down Japanese troops in Manchuria and China. The Soviets occupied most of Poland, giving them the upper hand in the most contentious issue during the conference. The Americans and British also held cards, however. By repeatedly praising Lend-Lease, Stalin signaled his desire for postwar credits and equipment. While leaning toward Roosevelt, the dictator also valued the understandings reached with Churchill in Moscow the previous October. Indeed, on the first day of Yalta he met with the prime minister before seeing the president. He understood that opposition from Washington and London could magnify his problems in securing a Poland strong enough to guard the gate and friendly enough to wish to do so. Above all, the Kremlin chief wanted the Big Three to contain postwar Germany, thereby forestalling another terrible invasion....After a week of hard bargaining, each side emerged satisfied, indeed aglow.

Frank Costigliola, Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War (Princeton University Press, 2012), 242-243, 248

ROOSEVELT'S

LOST



ALLIANCES

HOW PERSONAL POLITICS HELPED START THE COLD WAR

FRANK COSTIGLIOLA