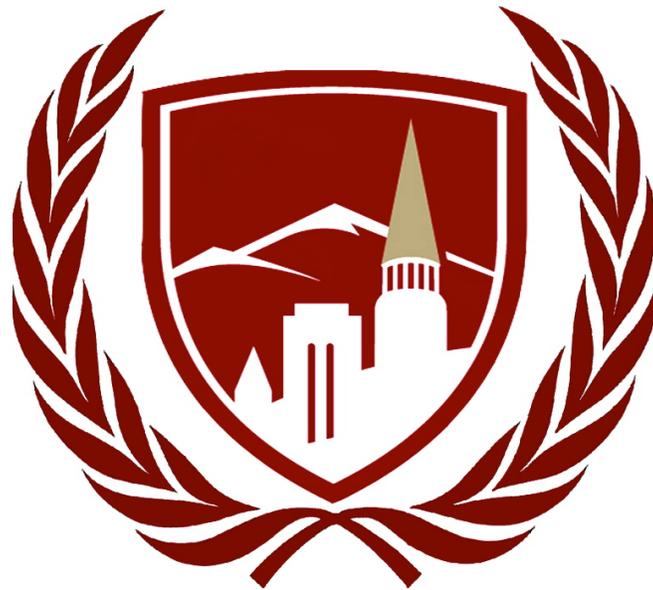


UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



ADVANCED YALTA CONFERENCE



By Sara Cardenas and Ian Croak

Introduction

In the closing months of the Second World War the soon to be victorious Allies and their respective heads of state met on the shores of the Black Sea in Crimea near a town called Yalta. For one week in February 1945 Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin, negotiated about Europe at the end of the Second World War. These negotiations between countries featured the division of Germany among the Allied Forces, the emerging Soviet Bloc, the return of American bombers downed in the USSR, as well strategies to end the war with Japan. More specifically, the leaders discussed proper wartime reparations for Germany, how to disarm the German Army, as well as how to eliminate the Nazi sentiment within Germany.

History of the Council

The idea for Yalta had to evolve slowly though. FDR met with other world leaders over the course of WWII on numerous occasions. The Atlantic Conference marked the beginning of these meetings, in August 1941 when FDR and Churchill met and created the Atlantic Charter. This charter would help guide the governance of the victorious allied powers at the end of World War 2 in matters of trade, and colonization.¹ The Cairo Conference² followed in November of 1943 when FDR and Churchill met with Chang Kai-shek followed by Tehran in December of '43 that saw FDR, Churchill and Stalin all sitting down together to talk.³ World War 2 was a massive undertaking and it took the effort of the great leaders of the great nations to coordinate it, so it was natural that the prominent world leaders would need to meet with each other over extended periods of time to synchronize strategies and support structures.

Proceeding Years

The Second World War officially began in 1939 when German forces invaded Poland in September of that year. They were followed by Russian troops invading from the East, with Poland falling in just a matter of weeks. At the time, the USSR and Germany were both engaged in a mutual non-aggression pact, and thus the USSR stood by as France, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium were all steamrolled by the German War Machine. The UK was the only European country to stand against Germany until 1941. It was with Operation Barbarossa that the USSR was finally dragged into War against Germany, nearly falling to a Blitzkrieg assault intended to take Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and Moscow. However, the harsh winter of 1941 set in, saving the Soviets for another year.⁴ The true turning point for the Allies and the USSR in the war against Germany came during the Battle of Stalingrad. The city, which had some significance as a major rail hub and production center, was not as militarily important as seizing the Russian oil fields in the Southern Caucuses around Baku. Still, Hitler wanted to take

¹ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian “The Atlantic Conference & Charter, 1941” <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/paris-peace>

² United States Department of State, Archive “The Cairo Conference, 1943” <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/107184.htm>

³ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian “The Tehran Conference, 1943” <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/tehran-conf>

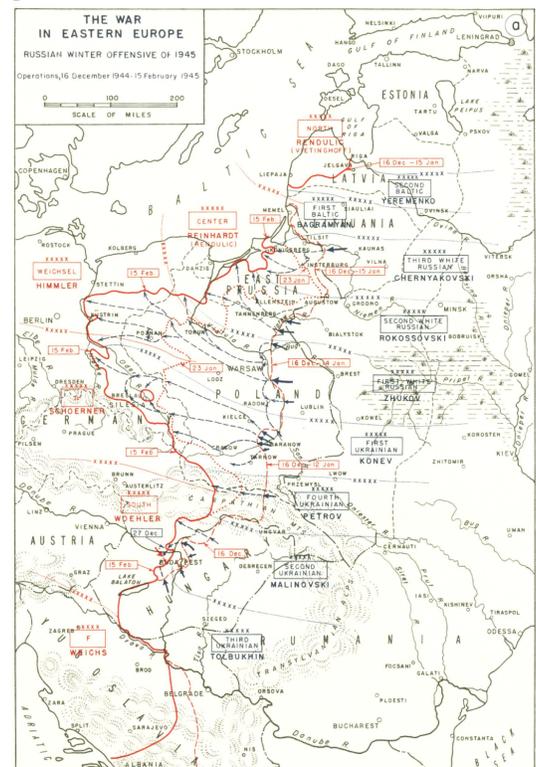
⁴ Esposito, Vincent J. Brigadier General Retired, “The West Point Atlas of War – World War II: European Theater (New York: Tess Press, 1995), pg 28-29

the city that bore Stalin's name and remove it from the map and thusly ordered more German military units against it rather than continuing to push the German advances Southward toward Baku.⁵ It was because of this, and the near constant allied bombing of Romanian Oil Fields from bases in North Africa, the Middle East, and eventually Italy that Germany almost completely ran out of gasoline by 1945. had rolled around the precious resource which was needed to drive her tanks was so scarce that the driving of cars and trucks was banned not just for civilians but the German military too had to resort to horse drawn carts and marching just to ensure that the tanks could keep rolling. It was the defense of Russia's Hero Cities, so termed because not only were the military but the civilians too fighting to defend the cities in the face of the German attacks. That finally halted and then reversed the momentum of the Eastern Front.

Current Military Situation in the East (at the time of the Conference)

As opposed to the opening of the War in the East with Operation Barbarossa in which the Soviet Military was organized along a system of numbered armies grouped in "Army Areas" a term that was interchangeable with an Army Group. The Russians had reorganized into Army Groups by 1944 and were in good position for the counter invasion of Germany that had been three years in the making. The Russians had nine Army groups fighting against the Axis six which were assembled for the defense of Germany.⁶

The Soviets continued with their offensive campaign from December of 1944 throughout the Yalta Conference. During this time the Soviets trapped German Army Group North in Western Latvia, encircling the Germans and preventing them from linking up with Army Group center. During this time Army Group center abandoned much of East Prussia, consolidating its forces around Königsberg, East Prussia's largest city and best option for staying supplied through the Soviet attacks. Meanwhile, it had become obvious that the Warsaw Uprising was going to fail. Knowing this, the First White Russian and First Ukrainian Army Groups both pushed across the Vistula River, pushing Army Groups Weichsel and A out of Poland completely and propelling the armu into areas of Germany proper by January. By February, the armies had conquered territory reaching the Oder and Niesse Rivers. In the Balkans the Fourth, Second, and Third Ukrainian Army groups fought against Army groups South and F, eventually pushing F out of Southern Yugoslavia and South back out of Budapest and across the Danube River toward Austria.⁷



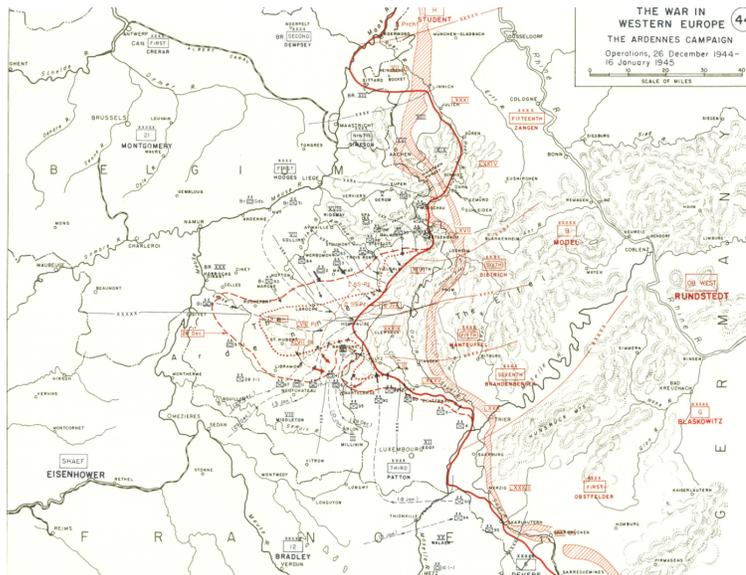
⁵ Esposito, Vincent J. Brigadier General Retired, "The West Point Atlas of War – World War II: European Theater (New York: Tess Press, 1995), pg 42-43

⁶ Esposito, Vincent J. Brigadier General Retired, "The West Point Atlas of War – World War II: European Theater (New York: Tess Press, 1995), pg 60-61

Current Military Situation in the West

The Allied position at the time of the conference was more precarious than that of the Soviets, as the Battle of the Bulge had just recently ended. The battle entailed a major offensive by five German Divisions into the Adennes forest of southern Belgium and northern Luxumborg. With the objective of routing the weakened American units relaxing there for the Christmas Holiday.⁸

The Germans struck on December 26, 1944, crossing a number of strategic points and nearly encircling the strategic crossroads town of Bastogne. Bastogne was previously held by the American 28th Infantry Division at fist held by elements of the American 28th Infantry Division who were relived of their defense of the area by the American 101st Airborne Division which moved in as a lynch pin of the city's defense against the German 53rd Infantry and 47th Panzer divisions. The bulge collapsed when Montgomery ordered the British First Army under Hodges and Eisenhower authorized Patton's Third army to move south and north respectively to collapse the pocket and relive the embattled American divisions. With this, the Allies accomplished their main goal of pushing the majority of German units back across the Rhine before the beginning of the Yalta Conference. Their success in this endeavor gave both Wilson and Churchill more room to maneuver with Stalin, as well as giving all three armies hope.



Current Political Situation

The United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain each bring various political views to the Yalta Conference. Through the past few years, there have been new occurrences, developments, and changes in the world due to the beginning of the Second World War. Because of this, views regarding destroyed democratic forces after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the prevalence of communist leaning partisan organizations in eastern Europe, and the positions of each leader on the issue of self-determination are each significant to help us better understand the leaders and their feelings towards the international relations within the war.

The Warsaw Uprising that occurred in Poland last year was a significant battle that impacts how the leaders feel entering the Yalta Conference. Under German control since 1939, the city of Warsaw is the capital of Poland and a central location between Eastern Europe and Germany. In August of 1944, the Polish Resistance Movement called the Home Army, began an offensive on

⁷ Esposito, Vincent J. Brigadier General Retired, "The West Point Atlas of War – World War II: European Theater (New York: Tess Press, 1995), pg 60-61

⁸ Esposito, Vincent J. Brigadier General Retired, "The West Point Atlas of War – World War II: European Theater (New York: Tess Press, 1995), pg 90-91

the German troops occupying the city. The advancement of Stalin's Red Army toward Warsaw was a reassuring factor that helped the Home Army decide to launch the offensive attack¹⁰. However, instead of advancing toward the city of Warsaw, Stalin ordered his troops to stay put, which meant demise for the Polish forces. The Polish resistance movement has been fighting for democracy within Poland, but more importantly, for self-determination. Currently, Poland is the only democratic country in Eastern Europe, However, the Polish forces lost the majority of the resistance leaders during the 63-day Warsaw Uprising¹¹. The failure of the Warsaw Uprising for the Home Army meant a setback for the anti-communist movement in Poland. This loss of leadership within Poland has made reorganization for the democratic movement more difficult. Although the United States and Great Britain wanted to help the allied Polish Army in the Warsaw Uprising each army lacks the forces necessary to aid Polish democracy forces while maintaining control of France. Stalin did not want to help the Polish Home Army, although the Red Army was only across the Vistula River at one point, because of the democratic intentions behind the Polish resistance movement. At the Tehran Conference, the United States and Great Britain also came to an agreement with Stalin that they would not step on his toes regarding Eastern Europe, essentially marking it as his territory to oversee.

Another important issue to be considered by the Big Three and their respective delegations at the Yalta Conference is the prevalence of Communist organizations in Eastern Europe. In Hungary, Soviet forces have regained power following its alliance with Nazi Germany during the early 1940s. When a Hungarian election proved the lack of support for the Communist party, Stalin chose to replace all leadership within Hungary with Communists. Each of the Eastern European countries have seen a similar situation of power control by the Soviet Union in order to spread Communism, no matter how disliked it is in the countries. Poland is an exception as the only democratic country to remain in Eastern Europe. Though it is not controlled by the Soviet Union, the Red Army's failure to intervene during the Warsaw Uprising has made it difficult for democracy to thrive. Yugoslavia is also different from most of eastern European countries due to its leader, Josip Broz Tito, who has aligned with Stalin and maintained a popular anti-Nazi resistance movement called the Yugoslavian Partisans.¹² Albania also maintains a Communist dictatorship that has caused it to isolate from the non-communist world. Each of the Eastern European countries, excluding Poland, has either become Communist or had Communist leadership put in place by Stalin. The United States and Great Britain do not support Stalin's Communist control over Eastern Europe nor do they support the spread of Communism into any other countries.

The self-determination of countries is a significant political issue that each leader feels strongly about and is sure to address at the upcoming conference. Prior to the entrance of the United States into World War II, the Atlantic Charter was signed in August of 1941 between Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Because of Roosevelt's strong feelings toward self-determination of states, the two countries agreed that self-government would be granted to all states under Britain

¹⁰ History Learning Site, "The Warsaw Uprising of 1944," http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/warsaw_uprising_of_1944.htm (accessed 10 January 2013).

¹¹ Lukasz Pajewski, "The Warsaw Uprising," August 1, 1944 – October 2, 1944," *Info Poland*, <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/classroom/pajak.html> (accessed 10 January 2013).

¹² Princeton, "Eastern Bloc," http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Eastern_Bloc.html (accessed 10 January 2013).

should the United States enter the war¹³. Through agreement of granting self-determination, Churchill feels that all of the other allies, namely the Soviet Union, need to grant self-determination to the states it holds power over. The Soviet Union holds power over most Eastern European states, and Churchill feels that they should be granted independence, especially the democratic Poland. Roosevelt supports the self-determination of all states, and feels that each ally should grant its states their own independence to self-govern.

Bloc Positions

Britain: It is Britain's position that Stalin and the Soviet Union should join the allies in the Pacific War against Japan¹⁴. Britain holds the views that the United States and the Soviet Union should remain strong allies, continuing to work with the British government for a peaceful post-war Europe. Britain is pushing for the surrender of Germany and the end of the Nazi Party, alongside the Soviet Union and the United States. The British government somewhat supports the idea of deindustrializing Germany after some convincing by Roosevelt. Britain supports the idea of a post-war international organization that can continue world peace following the surrender of Nazi Germany.

United States: The primary goal of the US during World War II is to spread democracy. As such, the US does not view Stalin as an expansionist threat at this time, contrary to the beliefs of Britain. The US has supported military focus on the Mediterranean and focus on the Pacific. America is focused on maintain close contact with Stalin and keeping the USSR involved in the war, believing their involvement necessary for the defeat of Germany and Japan. Although The US is focused on Germany, the main focus of the US government and military remains to be Japan and the Pacific¹⁵. However, FDR is insistent upon Stalin's involvement in the Pacific War, hoping Soviet aid will result in a military victory. Currently the USSR maintains control of Poland. Because one of America's most important ideals is self determination, the US (and Britain) both support the government of the people rather the Soviet government. The US is also highly in favor of a post war organization that would ensure that a world-wide war never happen again¹⁶.

United Soviet Socialist Republics: Following the nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939, Stalin and his military forces were unprepared for the attack by the Germans in 1941, although the American and British governments had warned him of a possible attack by Germany¹⁷. The Red Army was depleted when Hitler's army attacked and caused Stalin to build up his army to prepare for future battles, enabling him to create a strong force from the East¹⁸. Stalin has also previously held suspicious feelings towards Britain and the US due to their original refusal to open a second front against Germany to protect Soviet lives. However, in 1943 Stalin convinced the Allied forces to open a second front against Germany during a post-war

¹³ History Online, "Atlantic Charter," <http://www.history.com/topics/atlantic-charter> (accessed 10 January 2013).

¹⁴ Office of the Historian Online, "The Yalta Conference, 1945," <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/yalta-conf> (accessed 11 December 2013).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Biography Online, "Franklin D. Roosevelt," <http://www.biography.com/people/franklin-d-roosevelt-9463381?page=4> (accessed 21 December 2013).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ History Online, "Joseph Stalin," <http://www.history.com/topics/joseph-stalin> (accessed 4 January 2013).

conference in Iran, which helped to ease tensions between the Allies¹⁹. The USSR has led numerous Soviet victories in liberating Eastern European countries from the German army, and therefore has a strong bargaining power with the Western allies²⁰. Joseph Stalin, or the “Man of Steel” enters the Yalta Conference with strong political powers and maintains a vision for an expansive postwar Soviet Union under his control.

Preparation Questions

- How might the US’s involvement with Japan change their goals for the conference? How might it limit in their European obligations?
- How does the tension between the USSR and Britain and the US affect negotiations? Why is Stalin able to remain on the US and Britain’s good side?
- What military, economic, and diplomatic efforts are necessary to end the war in Europe as well as in Japan?
- How do smaller countries decide which powers to support during the war? Why do countries not officially involved in the war feel compelled to voice their official stances?
- How do countries that were decimated by Germany feel about the US, UK, and USSR positions about their future? What do these countries do to ensure their own sovereignty?

¹⁹ Biography Online, “Joseph Stalin,” <http://www.biography.com/people/joseph-stalin-9491723?page=1> (accessed 4 January 2013).

²⁰ PBS Online, “Joseph Stalin (1879-1953),” *Red Files*, http://www.pbs.org/redfiles/bios/all_bio_joseph_stalin.htm (accessed 4 January 2013).

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