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Stalin at the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences

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Introduction

The records of the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam conferences remain one of the key sources for the study of the Grand Alliance of World War II. No other source sheds as much light on the attitudes, policy preferences, and personal interactions of the leaders of the Allied coalition. Although many thousands of documents on Josif Stalin's foreign policy did not emerge from Russian archives until the early 1990s, publication of the Soviet record of the wartime summits dates back to 1961 when the journal *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* reproduced the Soviet version of the Tehran talks. By the end of the 1960s, Soviet transcripts of the plenary sessions of all three conferences had been published.¹ In the 1970s these records were expanded by the publication of more complete transcripts and by the appearance of Soviet versions of other conversations and meetings conducted during the summits.²

The United States, for its part, began publication in the 1950s of records from Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam,³ and the British archives made the relevant

1. *Tegeran-Yalta-Potsdam* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 1967). The English-language version is *The Tehran, Yalta & Potsdam Conferences* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969).

2. *Krymskaya konferentsiya rukovoditelei trekh soyuznykh derzhav—SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1979); and *Berlinskaya (Potsdamskaya) konferentsiya rukovoditelei trekh soyuznykh derzhav—SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1980). These volumes hereinafter will be referred to as *Krymskaya konferentsiya* and *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, respectively. The two volumes (which were republished in the 1980s) formed part of a six-volume series titled *Sovetskii Soyuz na mezhdunarodnykh konferentsiyakh perioda Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941–1945 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984). The Tehran volume (cited in note 20 below) was also published by Politizdat.

3. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences of Cairo and Tehran*, 1943, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961) (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS: Tehran*); *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1955) (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS: Yalta*); and *Foreign Relations*

materials available in the 1970s under the 30-year rule.⁴ The availability of parallel records naturally invited comparison, particularly between the Soviet and Western documentation. As expected, these comparisons revealed numerous differences of detail and emphasis. In addition, some larger discrepancies turned up, causing many in the West to fear that the published Soviet documents differed from the original archive versions and contained important omissions and post hoc amendments.⁵ These suspicions have been vindicated by an examination of the original transcripts of the Soviet records of Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam deposited in the archive of the Russian Foreign Ministry. The differences between the published and unpublished records mainly take the form of omissions rather than textual changes. Although these changes are important and revealing, they are not extensive enough to cast wholesale doubt on the value of the published Soviet documents.

This article presents an account of Stalin's discussions at Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam that uses both the published and the unpublished Soviet records of those conferences. When combined with Western documentation, these materials make possible the presentation of a much fuller picture of Stalin's thinking and calculations on the major policy issues facing the Grand Alliance during the final phase of the Second World War. The most important finding from the unpublished transcripts concerns the depth of Stalin's wartime commitment to the policy of dismembering Germany. The published Soviet records give the impression that Stalin was a reluctant proponent of dismemberment and that Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt took the initiative on the matter. This impression was in line with postwar Soviet propaganda depicting the Western powers as having been intent on dismembering Germany and thereby bearing responsibility for the east-west division of the country. This propagandistic gloss on Stalin's wartime policy on the German question prevails to this day. In 2005, for example, the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow mounted an exhibition on Soviet diplomacy during the war that featured videos with images of the published Soviet record of the Tehran conference, suggesting that it was Churchill and Roosevelt, not Stalin, who wanted to dismember Germany. In truth, as the unpublished Soviet records show, Stalin was by far the most enthusiastic advocate of German dismemberment, at least during the war.

of the United States: The Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), 1945, Vol. 2, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960) (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS: Potsdam*).

4. The British records of Tehran and Yalta are stored in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK), at PREM3/161 and CAB 99/31 respectively. For the British records of Potsdam, see *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series 1, Vol. 1 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1984).

5. See, for example, Robert Beitzell, ed., *Tehran, Yalta, Potsdam: The Soviet Protocols* (Hattiesburg, MS: Academic International, 1970), pp. iii–ix.

Tehran

The Tehran conference (28 November–1 December 1943) was originally intended to be a bilateral summit between the Soviet Union and the United States. Roosevelt had been pushing for such a meeting with Stalin for some time, and in May 1943 he sent Joseph Davies, the former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, to Moscow with a note suggesting when and where they should get together.⁶ Stalin agreed in principle to meet Roosevelt but did not want to commit himself to the specifics until after he dealt with the German summer offensive at Kursk. A date and venue for the meeting were not agreed until September. By then the meeting had been broadened to include Churchill, and the leaders had also agreed that the U.S. British, and Soviet foreign ministers would meet in Moscow in October 1943 as part of the preparations for a conference of the “Big Three.”

In preparing for the Moscow conference,⁷ the British and Americans submitted a large number of items for the proposed agenda. The Soviet government responded by suggesting only one item: “measures to shorten the war against Germany and its allies in Europe.” Although Soviet officials were prepared to discuss the political questions raised by their Western allies, they asked the British and Americans to table specific proposals. The Soviet government also insisted that the Moscow conference was only preparatory and would merely discuss draft proposals for subsequent consideration by the three governments.⁸ This Soviet response reflected Stalin’s view that the Anglo-American aim was to distract attention from plans to open a second front in France and to probe the Soviet position on a number of political questions, especially in relation to the future of Germany.⁹

6. E. Kimball MacLean, “Joseph E. Davies and Soviet-American Relations, 1941–1943,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 1980), pp. 73–93.

7. On the Moscow conference, see Keith Sainsbury, *The Turning Point: The Moscow, Cairo, and Tehran Conferences of 1943* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Vojtech Mastny, “Soviet War Aims at the Moscow and Tehran Conferences of 1943,” *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 1975), pp. 481–504; and D. Watson, “Molotov et La Conférence du Moscou Octobre 1943,” *Communisme*, No. 74/75 (2003), pp. 71–99.

8. *Moskovskaya konferentsiya Ministrov inostrannykh del SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii* (hereinafter referred to as *Moskovskaya konferentsiya*) (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), Docs. 10, 11, 14. This volume contains the Soviet record of the Moscow conference. The archive transcript may be found in Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (AVPRF), Fond (F.) 012, Opis (Op.) 9, Papka (Pap.) 132, Delo (D.) 6. As far as I can tell, there are no differences between the published and unpublished records. The equivalent American records may be found in *FRUS* 1943, Vol. 1, and the British version in NAUK, F0371/37031.

9. “K predstavleniyu soveshchaniyu v Moskve trekh ministrov,” Memorandum from Vladimir Dekanozov, Soviet deputy people’s commissar for foreign affairs, 3 October 1943, in AVPRF, F. 6, Op. 5b, Pap. 39, D. 6, Ll. 52–58. A copy is reprinted in Jochen Laufer and Georgii Kynin, eds., *SSSR i Germanskii vopros, 1944–1949*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 1996), Vol. 1, Doc. 59.

The Soviet negotiating stance did not augur well for the conference, but the British and American proposals spurred a major effort by the Soviet authorities to clarify their position on the questions posed. A large number of briefing documents and position papers were produced within the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, providing the basis for the Soviet Union's stance at the conference itself.¹⁰ Stalin did not attend the Moscow conference but was briefed extensively on its preparation and proceedings. On 18 October, the day before the conference opened, Stalin was presented with a summary document setting out the Soviet position on the various questions slated for discussion.¹¹ During the conference Stalin met twice with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and once with U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull. The Soviet leader also hosted the closing conference dinner on 30 October. Stalin's priority for the conference was evident from his talk with Eden on 27 October when he pressed the Foreign Secretary on the issue of the second front, stressing that the Soviet Union would not be able to mount any more big offensives against the Germans unless a threat from the West compelled Adolf Hitler to divide his forces.¹²

At the Moscow conference the Western powers reaffirmed their previous commitment to open a second front in France. The parties also agreed on the need to persuade Turkey to enter the war against Germany, and they discussed a Soviet proposal for Allied air bases in neutral Sweden. Cordell Hull's priority was to forge agreement on the establishment of a successor to the League of Nations, and the conference approved a declaration to this effect. The sides agreed to Moscow's suggestion that they hold further trilateral discussions on the proposed new international security organization. Another important decision was the adoption of a British proposal to establish a trilateral European Advisory Commission that would initially be responsible for examining the armistice terms for Germany. The only specific agreement reached at the conference on the future of Germany was a declaration that Austria would be detached from the Reich and restored as an independent state. But in the discussion of the German question all three foreign ministers broadly agreed on the

10. These documents can be found in AVPRF, F. 6, Op. 5b, Pap. 39, D. 1–2, 4–6; and AVPRF, F. 6, Op. 5b, Pap. 40, D. 11. A number of them are reproduced in Laufer and Kynin, *SSSR i Germanskii vopros*, Vol. 1.

11. "Predlozheniya: Predstavlennye gruppami NKID po punktam angliiskoi i amerikanskoi povestki dnya," in AVPRF, F. 6, Op. 5b, Pap. 39, D. 6, Ll.16–27. One of the main architects of the Soviet position at the Moscow conference was the former Foreign Commissar, Maksim Litvinov, who was responsible for postwar peace planning. See Geoffrey Roberts, "Litvinov's Lost Peace, 1941–1946," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Spring 2002), pp. 23–54.

12. G. P. Kynin et al., eds., *Sovetsko-angliiskie otnosheniya vo vremya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941–1945*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), Vol. 1, Doc. 295.

need to disarm, demilitarize, denazify, democratize, and dismember Germany. They also agreed to try the major Nazi leaders as war criminals.

A communiqué issued at the end of the Moscow conference declared the three states' commitment to "continue the present close collaboration and cooperation in the conduct of the war into the period following the end of hostilities" and concluded by noting "the atmosphere of mutual confidence and understanding which characterized all the work of the Conference."¹³ These sentiments were no mere propagandistic hyperbole. The conference had indeed been a resounding success and marked the beginning of a period of extensive tripartite cooperation in planning for the postwar world. Publicly the Soviet Union lauded the conference as the harbinger of a long and stable peace that would be guaranteed by the cooperation of the Big Three.¹⁴ Internally, the Soviet Foreign Commissariat instructed its diplomats that the conference was "a big event in the life of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs" which "all PCFA workers must study in detail . . . and, if possible, make proposals on the realization of its decisions."¹⁵

Stalin delivered his verdict on the conference during a speech in November 1943 marking the 26th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. In a section titled "The Consolidation of the Anti-Hitler Coalition and the Disintegration of the Fascist Bloc," Stalin said:

The victory of the allied countries over our common enemy approaches, and, despite the efforts of the enemy, relations between the allies and the military cooperation of their armies are not weakening but strengthening and consolidating. In this regard the historic decisions of the Moscow Conference . . . are eloquent testimony. . . . Now our united countries are fully resolved to carry out joint blows against the enemy that will lead to our final victory over them.¹⁶

Stalin's priority within the Grand Alliance remained a second front in France to draw substantial German forces to the west and ease the Soviet path to victory on the eastern front. In the speech Stalin noted Allied military action in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Italy and the impact of the continuing air bombardment of German industry. He also went out of his way to praise Western supplies to the USSR, saying that these had greatly facilitated the success of the Soviet summer campaign. But the sting in the tail was his observation that Allied military action in southern Europe was not tantamount to a

13. The communiqué is reproduced in *FRUS: 1943*, Vol. 1, pp. 742–744.

14. "Znachenije Moskovskoi konferentsii," *Izvestiya*, 2 November 1943, p. 1; "Vazhnyi vklad v obshchee delo soyuznikov," *Pravda* 2 November 1943, p. 1; and "K itogam Moskovskoi Konferentsii," *Voina i rabochii klass* (Moscow), No. 11 (November 1943), pp. 1–4.

15. "Vyvody i predlozheniya," November 1943, in AVPRE, F. 0511, Op. 1, D. 1, L. 72.

16. Josif Stalin, *O Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo Soyuza* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1946), pp. 108–109.

second front, which would further strengthen the Allies' military cooperation and accelerate the victory over Nazi Germany.¹⁷

Stalin's meeting with Churchill and Roosevelt took place in Tehran because the Soviet leader insisted on a venue that would enable him to remain in direct telephone and telegraphic contact with his General Staff in Moscow. According to General Sergei Shtemenko, who was then chief of operations on the General Staff, he had to report to Stalin three times a day on the situation at the front while they were en route to Tehran (by train to Baku and then by plane). Shtemenko continued briefing Stalin throughout the conference, and the Soviet leader authorized military directives telegraphed to him by Army-General Aleksei Antonov, the deputy chief of the General Staff.¹⁸

Iran had been occupied by British and Soviet troops since August 1941 in an operation that ousted a pro-German government in Tehran and secured the supply routes to the southern USSR. By 1943 British and Soviet troops had been formally withdrawn from the Iranian capital, but informally many Allied soldiers were still present there, and the Soviet embassy was considered a safe location for the conference. For security reasons, Roosevelt (and Stalin) stayed in the Soviet embassy, whereas Churchill resided at the British Legation nearby.

Stalin's first meeting at Tehran was with Roosevelt on 28 November 1943. According to Valentin Berezhkov, one of Stalin's interpreters, the meeting took place in a room adjoining the main conference hall, and the Soviet leader was at pains to ensure that the seating arrangements would accommodate Roosevelt in his wheelchair.¹⁹ Because this was the first time the two leaders had met, it was more a social call than anything else. Roosevelt began by asking about the situation on the eastern front and saying that he would like to draw 30–40 enemy divisions away from Stalin's forces. Stalin was naturally gratified and expressed sympathy for the logistical difficulties facing the United States in supporting an army of two million more than 3,000 miles from the American continent. Roosevelt then said that he intended to talk to Stalin about postwar issues, including the question of trade with the Soviet Union. Stalin said that after the war the Soviet Union would be a big market for the United States. Roosevelt agreed, noting that the United States would have a great demand for raw materials that could be supplied by the USSR.

17. Ibid.

18. S. M. Shtemenko, *The Soviet General Staff at Work, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), pp. 189–201.

19. Valentin Berezhkov, *History in the Making: Memoirs of World War II Diplomacy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983), p. 254. This story is probably apocryphal. Berezhkov claims that only he, Roosevelt, and Stalin were present at this meeting. In reality, Roosevelt's interpreter, Charles Bohlen, was also present, as one would expect. Moreover, Bohlen's report of the meeting indicates that Vladimir Pavlov, Stalin's chief interpreter, was present at the meeting, not Berezhkov.

They then discussed the combat abilities of China and agreed that although the Chinese were good warriors, they were badly led by the likes of Jiang Jièshí (Chiang Kai-shek). The two leaders also found a meeting of minds in an exchange about de Gaulle and the French. According to Stalin, in a remark omitted from the published Soviet record:

In politics de Gaulle is not a realist. He considers himself the representative of the true France which, of course, he does not represent. De Gaulle does not understand that there are two Frances: symbolic France, which he represents, and real France, which helps the Germans in the person of [Pierre] Laval, [Philippe] Pétain and others. De Gaulle does not have a relationship with the real France, which must be punished for its aid to the Germans.²⁰

Later in the conversation, when complaining about French collaboration and French expectations concerning the restoration of a postwar France, Stalin stated that “while the allies are begging the people to fight, the [French] people are tempted by such a peace. If the French know that they will get France without sacrifice, they will mock us allies even more.”²¹ In a similar vein, speaking about the return of Indochina to France after the war, Stalin said “it is necessary for the French people to understand that collaboration with the Germans does not come free. It must carry penalties.”²²

Roosevelt’s sentiments were similar, and the two agreed as well on the need to examine the position of France’s colonies after the war. In addition, Stalin agreed with an American idea to establish an “international commission on the colonies,” though he concurred with Roosevelt that they had better not raise the question of India with Churchill—it was a sore point with the British leader. To Roosevelt’s suggestion that India was not suited to a parliamentary system and might do better with some kind of Soviet system created from below, Stalin responded that “this would mean going along the path of revolution. In India there are many different peoples and cultures. There is

20. “Dos’e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii glav pravitel’stv SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii,” in AVPRF, F. 0555, Op. 1, Pap. 12, D. 24, Ll. 5–6. Cf. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya rukovoditelei trekh soyuznykh derzhav—SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1978), p. 80. To cover up this omission, the editors turn Roosevelt’s immediately following comment into a statement rather than a “reply.” For the American record of the Stalin-Roosevelt meeting, see *FRUS: Tehran*, pp. 483–486. According to the American account, Stalin considered de Gaulle “very unreal in his political activities.” “De Gaulle,” said Stalin, “acts as though he is the head of a great state, whereas, in fact, it actually commands little power.” See also Bohlen’s summary of Stalin’s comments regarding France at the tripartite dinner on 28 November: “throughout the evening Marshal Stalin kept reverting to the thesis that the French nation, and in particular its leaders and ruling classes were rotten and deserved to be punished for their criminal collaboration with Nazi Germany.”

21. “Dos’e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii,” in AVPRF, F. 0555, Op. 1, Pap. 12, D. 24, L. 6. Cf. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, p. 80.

22. “Dos’e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii,” L.7 Cf. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, p. 81.

no force or group in a position to lead the country.” But Stalin agreed with Roosevelt that the two of them, with their more detached view of the Indian question, were in a better position to examine it objectively.²³

The rapport between Roosevelt and Stalin continued during the first plenary session later that day. The main topic of discussion at the first meeting of the Big Three was the projected invasion of occupied France across the English Channel in 1944. In effect, Stalin and Roosevelt ganged up on Churchill and insisted that Operation Overlord, as it was called, should have absolutely priority in Anglo-American military operations for 1944. In siding with Roosevelt on this point, Stalin was well aware, from reports provided by Soviet spies, that the British and Americans had long disagreed about the priority of Overlord relative to continuing operations in the Mediterranean area. Although Churchill agreed in principle with Overlord, he doubted the wisdom of a cross-Channel invasion against the well-fortified French coast and instead favored attacking the “soft underbelly” of the Axis in Italy and the Balkans. In supporting Overlord over Churchill’s Mediterranean strategy, Stalin was pursuing the longstanding Soviet aim of a second front in France and wanted a definitive end to Western procrastinations on the issue. Stalin’s other major statement during this session was his announcement that the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan in the Far East after Germany had capitulated. This was not exactly a surprise to the Americans, for Stalin had revealed his intentions to Hull at the Moscow conference. But it still represented a major future military commitment, one that Roosevelt had been seeking from the Soviet Union since Pearl Harbor.²⁴

At the tripartite dinner that evening, Stalin’s main theme was the postwar fate of Germany. According to Charles Bohlen, who was the main U.S. interpreter at Tehran:

In regard to Germany, Marshal Stalin appeared to regard all measures proposed by either the President or Churchill for the subjugation and for the control of Germany as inadequate. . . . He appeared to have no faith in the possibility of the reform of the German people and spoke bitterly of the attitude of the German workers in the war against the Soviet Union. . . . He said that Hitler was a very able man, but not basically intelligent, lacking in culture and with a primitive approach to political and other problems. He did not share the view of the President that Hitler was mentally unbalanced and emphasized that only a very

23. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 52, pp. 79–82.

24. *Ibid.*, Doc. 53, pp. 82–91. A partial English translation of the Soviet transcripts of the plenary sessions at Tehran may be found in *The Tehran, Yalta & Potsdam Conferences*. However, the section of the transcript that records Stalin’s statement on Soviet entry into the Far Eastern war is omitted in this volume.

able man could accomplish what Hitler had done in solidifying the German people, whatever we thought of the methods.

Stalin also cast doubt on the utility of the principle of unconditional surrender announced by Roosevelt in January 1943, arguing that it united the German people against the Allies.²⁵ After dinner Stalin had a further exchange on the German question with Churchill, telling him that

he thought that Germany had every possibility of recovering from this war and might start on a new war within a comparatively short time. He was afraid of German nationalism. After Versailles, peace seemed assured, but Germany recovered very quickly. We must therefore establish a strong body to prevent Germany from starting a new war. He was convinced that [Germany] would recover.

Asked by Churchill how long the Germans would take to recover, Stalin said fifteen to twenty years. Stalin agreed with Churchill that the task was to make the world safe from Germany for at least 50 years but did not believe that the prime minister's proposed measures—disarmament, economic controls and territorial changes—went far enough.

Judging by later discussions at Tehran, as well as the report of this particular conversation, Stalin's objection to Churchill's vision of a curtailed and controlled Germany centered on the limited measures of dismemberment proposed by Britain—basically the detachment and isolation of Prussia from the rest of Germany—which were not severe enough for Stalin. Churchill also raised the Polish question with Stalin, who said little in response but indicated his readiness to discuss the country's postwar borders, including the acquisition by Poland of German territory.²⁶

On 29 November, before the second plenary session, Stalin met Roosevelt again. The main topic of conversation was Roosevelt's plans for a postwar international security organization. Stalin already knew the president's views because Roosevelt in mid-1942 had told Soviet Foreign Commissar Vyacheslav Molotov about his idea of having the great powers constitute themselves as an international police force dedicated to maintaining peace. Upon learning of Roosevelt's proposal, Stalin had cabled Molotov in Washington, DC, on 1 June 1942 that the president's "considerations about peace protection after the war are absolutely sound. There is no doubt that it would be impossible to maintain peace without creating a united military force involving Brit-

25. Robert E. Sherwood, ed., *The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins: An Intimate History*, 3 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1949), Vol. 2, p. 777. See also *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 54, pp. 91–92.

26. See the transcript in NAUK, Prem 3/136/11/75892.

ain, the United States, and the USSR that could prevent aggression. Tell Roosevelt that . . . [he] is absolutely right and that his position will be fully supported by the Soviet government.”²⁷

At Tehran, Roosevelt outlined to Stalin his plan for an international organization with three components: a general organization of all the “united nations”; an executive committee of ten or eleven countries; and a “police committee” of the Big Three plus China. Referring to the role of China, Stalin observed that the small states of Europe would not like such an organization, and he suggested instead the establishment of two organizations—one for Europe and one for the Far East. Roosevelt noted that this was similar to a proposal put forward by Churchill but added that the U.S. Congress would never agree to membership in a solely European organization. Stalin asked that if a world organization was formed, would the United States send its troops to Europe? Not necessarily, said Roosevelt. In the event of aggression in Europe the United States would supply ships and planes, but the troops could come from Britain and the Soviet Union. Roosevelt asked what Stalin thought of this, and the Soviet leader began by noting that at dinner the previous night Churchill had said that Germany would not be able to reestablish its power quickly after the war. Stalin did not agree. He believed that Germany would be able to reestablish itself in fifteen to twenty years and then be in a position to launch a new war of aggression. To prevent this from happening, the great powers had to be able to occupy key strategic positions in and around Germany. The same was true of Japan, and the new international organization had to have the right to occupy these strategic positions. Roosevelt said that “he agreed with Marshal Stalin one hundred percent.”²⁸

At the second plenary session, the discussion about Operation Overlord continued. Stalin pressed Churchill on a number of connected matters: the date of the invasion of France (so that the Soviet Union could know where it stood and could plan accordingly); the appointment of an Anglo-American supreme commander of the operation (necessary for the planning to have any reality, in Stalin’s opinion); and the relationship between Overlord and the other planned military actions by the western Allies. The sharpness of the exchanges with Churchill during this session was summed up by Stalin’s barb that he “would like to know whether the English believe in Operation Overlord or simply speak of it to reassure the Russians.”²⁹

27. Oleg A. Rzheshevsky, ed., *War and Diplomacy: The Making of the Grand Alliance*, trans. by T. Sorokina (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), Doc. 82, p. 204

28. *Teheranskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 56, pp. 101–105.

29. *Ibid.*, Doc. 57, p. 119.

The following day, 30 November, Churchill had a bilateral meeting with Stalin and continued to equivocate about Overlord, arguing that he was not sure an invasion could be sustained against a large German force in France. Stalin insisted, however, that the Red Army was counting on an Allied invasion of northern France and that he had to know now whether the operation would go ahead. If it began soon, the Red Army could mount a multi-pronged offensive to keep the Germans tied down in the east.³⁰ At the tripartite lunch that followed, Roosevelt announced that he and Churchill had agreed they would definitely launch Overlord in May 1944, together with a supporting invasion of southern France. With the decision to open a second front finally nailed down, the conversation between Churchill and Stalin took an altogether friendlier turn. Churchill started by saying that the USSR had a right to warm-water ports, and Stalin took the opportunity to raise the issue of Turkey's control of the Black Sea straits and the need to revise the transit regime in the Soviet Union's favor. Stalin also spoke about securing warm-water outlets in the Far East, including the Manchurian ports Darien and Port Arthur, which had been leased by Tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century but ceded to Japan following defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905. Churchill responded by reiterating that “Russia must have access to warm waters,” adding that “the direction of the world must be concentrated in the hands of those nations who are fully satisfied and have no pretensions . . . [O]ur three nations are such countries. The main thing is that after we have agreed between ourselves we will be able to consider ourselves fully satisfied.”³¹

Friendly exchanges on various political matters continued the next day. During lunch, the three leaders discussed Churchill's pet project of persuading Turkey to enter the war on the side of the Allies. Stalin was skeptical, but he committed the Soviet Union to declare war on Bulgaria if Turkey's entry into the war precipitated a Bulgarian-Turkish conflict.³² This came as a great relief to Churchill, who thanked Stalin for making such a commitment. In a discussion about Finland, Churchill expressed sympathy and understanding about Soviet security needs in relation to Leningrad but hoped that Finland

30. *Ibid.*, Doc. 58. See also the transcript in NAUK, PREM 3/136/11/75892.

31. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 59, p. 126. Cf. *FRUS: Tehran*, pp. 565–681.

32. Stalin had already indicated that this was his position at the plenary session on 29 November when he stated: “Concerning the position of the Soviet government in relation to Bulgaria, Mr. Churchill should not worry. If Turkey declares war only on Germany and Bulgaria attacks Turkey, the Soviet Union will consider itself at war with Bulgaria.” This statement was omitted from the published version of the Soviet record. See “Do's'e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii,” in AVPRF, F. 0555 Op. 1, Pap. 12, D. 24, L. 50. Cf. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, p. 114.

would not be annexed by the USSR after the war. Stalin said he believed in an independent Finland but would insist on territorial adjustments in the Soviet Union's favor and would demand that the Finns pay reparations for war damages. Churchill reminded Stalin of the Bolshevik slogan during the First World War—"no annexations, no indemnities"—but the Soviet leader quipped, "I already told you, I have become a conservative."³³

After lunch, at the formal plenary session, the leaders soon reached amicable agreement about distribution of the Italian naval and merchant fleet. Churchill and Roosevelt promised to deliver ships to Stalin as soon as they could. The next subject for discussion—Poland—was a little trickier. Churchill and Roosevelt raised with Stalin the question of the reestablishment of Soviet relations with the Polish exile government in London—relations that had been severed in the aftermath of the Katyń crisis of April 1943.³⁴ Stalin insisted that the Polish exiles were collaborating with the Germans and that the Soviet Union would refuse any contact until the alleged collaboration ceased. On the territorial question, Stalin supported the idea of concessions to Poland at the expense of Germany but demanded that the eastern border be the one established in 1939, allowing for western Belorussia and western Ukraine to be incorporated into the USSR. When Eden suggested that this meant the "Molotov-Ribbentrop line," Stalin said that Eden could call it what he liked. Molotov intervened to say that they were talking about the "Curzon line" and that no essential differences existed between the ethnographical frontier established in 1920 by British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and the Soviet-Polish border proposed by Stalin. Stalin did concede, however, that any area east of the Curzon line with a majority of ethnic Poles could go to Poland.

The final topic discussed by the Big Three at Tehran was the dismemberment of Germany. According to the *published* Soviet record, the conversation began like this:

Stalin: What other questions are there for discussion?

Roosevelt: The question of Germany.

Stalin: What proposals do we have in this regard?

Roosevelt: The dismemberment of Germany.

Churchill: I am for the dismemberment of Germany.³⁵

33. See the transcript in NAUK, PREM 3/136/11/75892, p. 16.

34. See George Sanford, "The Katyń Massacre and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1941–1943," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (January 2006), pp. 95–111.

35. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, p. 148. This is the fragment from the published Tehran record featured in the video installation at the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow in 2005.

The Soviet archive transcript reveals an important interjection by Stalin that is omitted from the published Soviet record. In response to Roosevelt's mention of dismemberment, Stalin declared: "This is what we prefer."³⁶ Later in the conversation Stalin made the same point, this time in demanding to know whether Churchill objected to the dismemberment of Germany.³⁷ When Stalin was subsequently asked by Churchill whether he "preferred a fragmented Europe," the Soviet leader replied "not Europe, but Germany."³⁸ According to the British record of the discussion, Stalin's view was that:

It was far better to break up and scatter the German tribes. Of course they would want to unite, no matter how much they were split up. They would always want to reunite. In this he saw great danger, which would have to be neutralized by various economic measures and in the long run by force if necessary. That was the only way to keep the peace. But if we were to make a large combination with Germans in it, trouble was bound to come. We had to see to it that they were kept separate . . . There were no measures to be taken which excluded a movement towards reunion. Germans would always want to reunite and take their revenge. It would be necessary to keep ourselves strong enough to beat them if they ever let loose another war.³⁹

Roosevelt said that Germany had been safer when divided into 107 principalities, but Churchill argued that five or six larger units, including a Danubian Federation, were better. Stalin reiterated that "Germany should at all costs be broken up so that she could not reunite" and proposed that the matter be referred to the tripartite European Advisory Commission, established by the Moscow conference to examine the terms of Germany's surrender and occupation.⁴⁰

At the end of the discussion, Churchill returned to the question of Poland's frontiers and tabled a formal proposal that they be constituted by the Curzon Line in the east and by the River Oder in the west. According to the

36. "Dos'e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii," L. 98. Cf. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, p. 148.

37. "Dos'e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii," L. 99. This was omitted from the Soviet record. Cf. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, p. 149.

38. "Dos'e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii," L. 100. This statement, too, was omitted from the published Soviet record. See *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, p. 150. The British record of the discussion conveys an even stronger impression of Stalin's preference for dismemberment: "Marshal Stalin said he would like to see Germany split up." "Marshal Stalin said . . . he preferred a plan for the partition of Germany if Germany was to be broken up, something like the President's plan which he preferred as being more likely to weaken Germany." "The Prime Minister asked Marshal Stalin if he contemplated a Europe of little States, all disjointed, with no larger units at all. Marshal Stalin replied, not Europe, but Germany. Poland and France were large States. Romania and Bulgaria were small States, but Germany must be divided." See "Record of a Conversation at the Soviet Embassy, Tehran, on 1st December 1943," in NAUK, PREM 3/136/11/75982, p. 19.

39. "Record of a Conversation at the Soviet Embassy, Tehran, on 1st December 1943," p. 20.

40. *Ibid.*

published Soviet record, Stalin said that because the Soviet Union had no ice-free ports in the Baltic, it should be given Königsberg and Memel, which he claimed were historically Slavic lands. But according to the archive transcript, Stalin did not actually claim that Königsberg and Memel were Slavic and instead simply said, “The Russians need a lump of German territory.”⁴¹

On 7 December 1943 the Big Three announced to the world that they had met in Tehran. Newspapers in the Allied countries published the famous photograph of Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin sitting in front of the conference building. A communiqué issued in their name stated that

we express our determination that our nations shall work together in war and in the peace that will follow. As to war—our military staffs have joined in our round table discussions, and we have concerted plans for the destruction of the German forces. We have reached complete agreement as to the scope and timing of operations to be undertaken from the east, west and south. . . . And as to peace—we are sure that our concord will win an enduring peace. . . . We came here with hope and determination. We leave here, friends in fact, in spirit and in purpose.⁴²

Soviet press coverage of the results of Tehran was even more laudatory than Soviet reporting on the Moscow conference. An editorial in *Izvestiya* declared that the Tehran decisions were of “historic importance for the fate of the entire world,” and the editorial in *Pravda* stated that the conference declaration was “the harbinger not only of victory but of a long and stable peace.”⁴³ Stalin himself went to the trouble of changing the headline of the TASS report on Tehran from the neutral “Conference of the Heads of the Governments of the Soviet Union, USA, and Great Britain” to “Conference of the Leaders of the Three Allied Powers.”⁴⁴

On 10 December a document summarizing the discussions at Tehran was prepared for Stalin. Stalin’s secretaries always took pains to compile an accurate record of his conversations, and their summary very closely followed the official Soviet records of Tehran. Stalin’s handwritten corrections and annotations indicate that he carefully read these summaries, and the documents can, therefore, be taken as a record of what he thought he had said and committed himself to at Tehran.

41. “Do’s’e materialov Tegeranskoi konferentsii,” L. 101. Cf. *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 62, p. 150.

42. *The Tehran, Yalta & Potsdam Conferences*, pp. 51–52.

43. See the unsigned editorials: “Znamenatel’naya vstrecha rukovoditelei trekh souznykh derzhav,” *Izvestiya* (Moscow), 7 December 1943, p. 1; and “Istoricheskoe reshenie,” *Pravda* (Moscow), 7 December 1943, p. 1.

44. For a facsimile of Stalin’s handwritten correction, see “Tegeran-43,” *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn’*, No. 2 (February 2004), p. 12.

The summary document repeated Stalin's offer to accept Churchill's proposal on Poland's borders, providing that they could agree on the transfer of Memel and Königsberg to the USSR. Regarding Turkey, the document cited a statement by Stalin that "a big country like the USSR must not be locked inside the Black Sea and that it was necessary to re-examine the Straits regime." With regard to Stalin's views on the dismemberment of Germany, the document stated:

Comrade Stalin declared that in relation to the aim of weakening Germany, the Soviet government preferred to dismember it. Comrade Stalin positively favored Roosevelt's plan but without predetermining the number of states into which Germany is to be split. He came out against Churchill's plan to create, after the division of Germany, a new, unsustainable state like the Danubian Federation. Comrade Stalin spoke in favor of separate Austrian and Hungarian states.⁴⁵

As for the question of a postwar international security organization, the document summarized Roosevelt's views and noted Stalin's counterproposal of two bodies—one for Europe and one for the Far East. Stalin changed this part of the document to say that he had no objection to Roosevelt's proposal,⁴⁶ but he left unamended the summary of his views on the expansive rights such an organization would have vis-à-vis Germany and Japan: "Comrade Stalin indicated that the formation of such an organization was not sufficient in itself. It was necessary to create an organization with the right to occupy strategically important points to prevent Germany and Japan from embarking on new aggression."⁴⁷

Yalta

The Yalta conference (or Crimean conference, in Soviet parlance) on 4–11 February 1945 was an altogether grander affair than Tehran. The delegations were larger and included a wider range of key personnel. Stalin, for example,

45. "Izlozhenie otdel'nykh voprosov obsuzhдавshikhся na konferentsii v Tegerane," in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), F. 558, Op. 11, D. 234, Ll. 99–104.

46. This correction was in accordance with Stalin's statement to Roosevelt at a third meeting of the two men on 1 December. The Soviet leader indicated that he now supported the president's proposal for a single international organization. The other topic of discussion was the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states in 1940 and Roosevelt's explanation of the political difficulties it posed for him at home because of the influence of Baltic-American groups. See *Tegeranskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 63, pp. 151–157.

47. "Izlozhenie otdel'nykh voprosov obsuzhдавshikhся na konferentsii v Tegerane," Ll. 99–104. In Russian the phrase "strategically important points" is "vazhnye v strategicheskom otnoshenii punkty."

was accompanied to the conference by Molotov; by Molotov's deputy, Andrei Vyshinskii; by General Antonov; by the naval commissar, Admiral Nikolai Kuznetsov; by the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Andrei Gromyko; by the Soviet ambassador to Britain, Fedor Gusev; and by the former ambassador to Britain, Ivan Maiskii, who was now in charge of Soviet reparations policy. Discussions at Yalta ranged more broadly than at Tehran, and the leaders adopted far more decisions. At the previous meeting of the Big Three the main focus of discussion had been the war, whereas at Yalta the three leaders were firmly focused on the emerging postwar order.

Yalta, like Tehran, featured bilateral meetings among the Big Three as well as the tripartite plenary sessions. Stalin's first meeting, on 4 February 1945, was with Churchill. Both Soviet and Western forces were by now fighting in Germany, and the two leaders had a brief exchange about the progress of the battle there.⁴⁸ Stalin next met Roosevelt and had a more extensive conversation.⁴⁹ The two men continued to carp about de Gaulle, as they had at Tehran. Stalin noted that de Gaulle was not a "complicated person" and went on to say that

De Gaulle does not fully understand the position of France. Americans, English, and Russians have spilled blood in order to liberate France. The French suffered defeat and now have only eight divisions. Nevertheless, de Gaulle wants France to have the same rights accorded to the USA, England, and Russia.

Responding to Roosevelt's comment that the United States was equipping the eight French divisions, Stalin said, "But the army of France is weak at present. The Yugoslavs have a good army. Nevertheless, de Gaulle demands for himself all rights."⁵⁰

The first plenary session began at 5:00 P.M. on 4 February. Stalin, as host, invited Roosevelt to open the proceedings, which he did by saying that the participants already had a good understanding of each other and should be frank in their discussions at the conference. The plenary session then turned to an exchange of information and views about the military situation on the various fronts.⁵¹

The first real political discussion at Yalta took place at the second plenary

48. *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 3.

49. *Ibid.*, Doc. 4, pp. 45–48.

50. These comments of Stalin's were excised from the published document (see *ibid.*) but may be found in the archive record, "Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav—SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii," in AVPRF, F. 06, Op. 7a, D. 7, L. 30.

51. *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 5. At the end of this session Churchill raised the question of Germany's future "if it had one." Stalin responded that Germany would have "some future." However, the qualifying particle "some" (*kakoe-libo*), recorded in the archive record, is omitted from this published document. See "Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav," L. 12.

session on 5 February, when the topic was the future of Germany. As at Tehran, Stalin pushed hard for a definite commitment to dismember Germany after the war. According to the *published* Soviet record, at the very beginning of the discussion Stalin stated that

he would like to discuss the following questions at today's session. First, the proposal to dismember Germany. In relation to this there had taken place an exchange of views at Tehran and then between him Stalin, and Churchill in Moscow in October 1944. But neither in Tehran nor Moscow had any decisions been taken. *Now one ought to arrive at a view on this question.*⁵²

However, the italicized sentence does not appear in the archive transcript. The archive version contains the following sentences, which were omitted from the published record: "Evidently, we all support the dismemberment of Germany. But it is necessary to shape this into decisions. He, comrade Stalin, proposes to take such decisions at today's session." Referring to his discussions with Churchill in Moscow in October 1944, Stalin noted that because of Roosevelt's absence it had not been possible to decide then about the dismemberment of Germany, but "has not the time come to decide this question?"

As the conversation proceeded, Stalin interrupted Churchill to ask "when the question of the dismemberment of German would be put before the new people in Germany. The thing is this question is not in the conditions of surrender. Perhaps a clause on the dismemberment of Germany should be added to the terms of surrender?" Responding to Roosevelt's suggestion that the matter be referred to the three foreign ministers who should be charged with drawing up a plan for the study of the dismemberment project, Stalin said that although he could accept this "compromise proposal," he believed "it was necessary to say directly that we consider it imperative to dismember Germany and that we all support this." Stalin continued:

The second point of the decision must be the inclusion in the surrender terms of a point concerning the dismemberment of Germany, but without indicating how many parts. He, comrade Stalin, would like the decision on the dismemberment of Germany made known to groups of people who will be shown the terms of unconditional surrender. It is important for the allies that groups of people, be they generals or other individuals, know that Germany will be dismembered. To Comrade Stalin, Churchill's plan not to tell leading groups of Germans about the dismemberment of Germany seems risky. It would be expe-

52. "Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav," Ll. 21–26. Cf. *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 6. The British and American records of this discussion are available in NAUK, PRO CAB 99/31, pp. 119–120; and *FRUS: Yalta*, pp. 611–615, 624–627. All of the following block quotations are from this Soviet source.

dient to speak of this beforehand. It would be to the advantage of us, the allies, if the military groups or the government not only signed the surrender terms drawn up in London [by the EAC] but also signed terms about the dismemberment of Germany in order to bind the population to it. Then the population will be more easily reconciled to dismemberment.

Eventually Stalin conceded that it would be unwise to publicize dismemberment too far in advance, but he persisted on the need for clarity on the Allied position and the inclusion of dismemberment in the terms of surrender:

Comrade Stalin further stated that one could take a decision on the first point, which would read “the dismemberment of Germany and the establishment of a commission to work out a concrete plan for dismemberment.” The second point of decision would read: “to add to the terms of unconditional surrender a point about the dismemberment of Germany without mentioning the number of parts into which it will be divided.

All of these statements by Stalin on the dismemberment of Germany were omitted from the published Soviet record of the Yalta conference.⁵³

When the discussion moved on to the question of whether France should be given a zone of occupation in Germany, Stalin opposed the move, arguing that the French did not deserve it and that such a decision would lead to demands from other Allied countries for a share in the occupation. According to the published Soviet record, Stalin claimed that he stood for a strong France. But the published record omitted the remark he made immediately after this, as transcribed in the unpublished record: “It is impossible to forget the past. In this war France opened the gates to the enemy. This cost the allies colossal sacrifices in Europe. This is why we cannot place France on the same level as the three great allies.”⁵⁴ Stalin relented only when the other leaders made clear that the French zone would be carved out of territories to be occupied by the British and Americans. But Stalin continued to oppose the inclusion of France on the Allied Control Commission (ACC) for Germany, despite British arguments that it was illogical to allow the French an occupation zone but to deny them representation on the ACC. Stalin was evidently not prepared to discuss the matter further, so he switched to the more comfortable topic of reparations and announced that Maiskii, who was sitting beside him, would make a presentation on the Soviet Union’s behalf. This came as news to Maiskii, who whispered to Stalin that they had yet to put a figure on Soviet

53. “Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav,” Ll. 21–26; and *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 6.

54. “Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav,” L. 30; and *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, p. 67. This whole section of discussion concerning France was omitted from the first version of the published Soviet record when it appeared in the 1960s.

reparations demands. Molotov, who was sitting on the other side of Stalin, intervened in this huddle, and they agreed on the spot to demand \$10 billion in reparations rather than \$5 billion, the low-end figure that had featured in Soviet internal discussions before the conference.⁵⁵

Maiskii duly gave his report outlining the principles of the Soviet reparations plan. First, reparations would be paid by Germany in kind, not money. Second, Germany would pay reparations in the form of lump removal of factories, machinery, vehicles, and tools from its national wealth at the end of the war and annual deliveries of goods thereafter. Third, Germany would be economically disarmed by reparations, leaving only 20 percent of its prewar heavy industry intact. Fourth, reparations would be paid over a 10-year period. Fifth, to implement the reparations policy, the German economy would have to be strictly controlled by Britain, the United States, and the USSR for a prolonged period. Sixth, all Allied countries damaged by Germany would be compensated by reparations, applying the principle that those that had suffered the most would receive the biggest payments, although in no case could there be full restitution. When it came to the compensation figure for the Soviet Union, Maiskii played safe and spoke of *at least* \$10 billion. Maiskii concluded by proposing the establishment of an Anglo-American-Soviet reparations commission that would meet in Moscow and negotiate the details of the plan.

In the ensuing discussion, both Churchill and Roosevelt argued that the experience of Versailles cast doubt on the wisdom of trying to extract reparations from Germany, but they agreed to establish a reparations commission. Stalin objected to the suggestion that France would receive the same level of reparations from Germany allotted to Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. He used the familiar argument concerning France's contribution to the war effort:

France's sacrifices cannot be compared to those of the three main allies. [France] participates in the war with only 8–10 divisions and part of its fleet. Yugoslavia has 12 divisions, but we do not place it on the same plane as the three powers. The Lublin Poles have 10 divisions—more than de Gaulle.⁵⁶

At the end of the session, Churchill quipped that the reparations plan should be based on the principle of “each according to his needs, and in Germany's

55. This incident is recounted in Maiskii's diary entry for 5 February 1945, reproduced in Oleg A. Rzheshhevskii, *Stalin i Cherkhill* (Moscow: Nauka, 2004), Doc. 175, pp. 497–498. Maiskii's memoir of Yalta, published during the Soviet era, makes no mention of the incident and rather downplays his own role in the proceedings. See I. M. Maiskii, *Vospominaniya sovetskogo diplomata*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya 1987), pp. 747–764.

56. “Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav,” L. 33. This statement was omitted from the published Soviet record. See *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, p. 77.

case according to her abilities [to pay].” Stalin replied that he “preferred another principle: each according to his deserts.”⁵⁷ The final protocol of the conference incorporated the substance of the Soviet reparations plan but, at Churchill’s insistence, remained noncommittal on the figures, mentioning \$20 billion as an overall figure (with half going to the Soviet Union) but only as a basis for discussion by the reparations commission.

At the third plenary session on 6 February, the Big Three discussed the great powers’ voting rights in the proposed United Nations (UN) organization. Stalin emphasized that the agreed procedure had to be designed to avoid divergences among the great powers, with the aim of constructing an organization that would ensure peace for at least 50 years. This first discussion was inconclusive, but the voting issue was resolved amicably later in the conference by adoption of the great power veto principle, which remains in place in the UN Security Council to this day. The conferees also agreed that the states invited to the founding conference of the UN in San Francisco would include any country that declared war on Germany by the end of the month, a device designed by Churchill to allow Turkey to attend (Ankara declared war on Germany on 23 February 1945) but to exclude neutral states such as Ireland that had not been as cooperative as the British thought they should have been.

A much thornier issue, raised by Churchill at the session on 6 February, was the question of Poland; specifically, whether to recognize the pro-Soviet Polish Provisional Government established by Stalin in January 1945. Both Churchill and Roosevelt wanted the “Lublin government” (so-called because Lublin was the first base of its administration in Soviet-occupied Poland) replaced by a broad-based provisional government reflective of Polish public opinion. In response, Stalin strongly defended the Soviet Union’s policy, pointing out that the reestablishment of a strong and independent but friendly Poland was a vital matter of security for the USSR. According to the Soviet archive transcript of this session, Stalin also argued:

The Polish Provisional Government has, in any case, no less broad a democratic basis than the government of de Gaulle. The French government has still not carried out reform, whereas the Polish government has implemented agricultural reform, and this constitutes the basis of its popularity. Again, it is not certain which one enjoys the greater trust within his country—[the Polish Communist leader Bolesław] Bierut or de Gaulle?⁵⁸

57. *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 6.

58. “Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav,” L. 102. This statement was omitted from the published Soviet record. See *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, p. 144.

At the same plenary session Stalin pointedly asked Churchill about the situation in Greece following the outbreak of civil war between a Communist-led partisan movement and British-backed royalists, but hastened to add:

He [Stalin] was by no means getting ready to criticize British policy in Greece . . . *Churchill*, interrupting . . . Stalin, states that he is very grateful to him for the restraint shown by the Soviet side during the Greek events . . . *Stalin*, continuing, says that he would like to ask Churchill simply to inform us about what is going on in Greece.⁵⁹

Stalin's comment was intended as a reminder to Churchill that in October 1944 the two of them had agreed to a spheres-of-influence agreement in the Balkans that allocated Greece to the British sphere. The Soviet Union, Stalin was implying, was following a non-intervention policy in relation to the Greek events, and Stalin expected Churchill to reciprocate, not just in the Balkans but in relation to Poland, too.⁶⁰

After the third plenary session, Roosevelt wrote Stalin a note explaining that the United States would not recognize the Lublin government and proposing instead the formation of a new government consisting of Poles based in Poland and those living abroad, including former members of the London exile government. In response, at the fourth plenary session on 7 February, the Soviet leader tabled a proposal on Poland consisting of three main components: (a) recognition of the Curzon line; (b) demarcation of Poland's western border along the Oder-Neisse line; and (c) enlargement of the Lublin government to include "democratic leaders" from Poles living abroad.⁶¹ This proposal was essentially a variation on the position the Soviet Union had been pushing for a year or more. It provoked much discussion, extending over several plenary sessions of the Big Three and separate meetings of the three foreign ministers—Eden, Molotov and Edward Stettinius, Jr. (Hull's successor)—who were meeting together as well as attending the plenary ses-

59. "Zapisi zasedanii i besed rukovoditelei trekh derzhav," L. 105. This statement was omitted from the published Soviet record. See *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, p. 145.

60. On the percentages agreement, see K. G. M. Ross, "The Moscow Conference of October 1944 (Tolstoy)," in William Deakin, Elisabeth Barker, and Jonathan Chadwick, eds., *British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944* (London: Macmillan 1988), pp. 67–77; Albert Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin Secret 'Percentages' Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (April 1978), pp. 368–387; Panos Tsakaloyannis, "The Moscow Puzzle," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1986), pp. 37–55; P. G. H. Holdich, "A Policy of Percentages? British Policy and the Balkans after the Moscow Conference of October 1944," *International History Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (February 1987), pp. 29–47; and Geoffrey Roberts, "Beware Greek Gifts: The Churchill-Stalin 'Percentages Agreement' of October 1944," *Mir istorii*, No. 1 (2003), <http://www.historia.ru/2003/01/roberts.htm>.

61. *Krymskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 10, p. 116.

sions. Eventually the three sides agreed that “the Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland” would 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.” The Curzon line was set as Poland’s eastern frontier, but the details of its western frontier with Germany were left open for discussion at a future peace conference.

Agreement on a government formula for liberated Yugoslavia proved much easier to attain. The three leaders quickly decided that Josip Broz Tito (the leader of the Communist partisans) and the Yugoslav exile politicians should form a united government. Equally congenial was the discussion about Soviet participation in the Far Eastern war, a subject that Stalin and Roosevelt had discussed at a bilateral meeting on 8 February.⁶² The three sides agreed that the USSR would abrogate the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact of April 1941 and join the war in the Far East two or three months after the defeat of Germany. In return, the Soviet Union would regain the territories lost by Imperial Russia to Japan after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905. The Soviet Union would acquire South Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands, and Port Arthur on the Chinese mainland would be leased to the USSR as a naval base. The nearby port of Darien would be internationalized and Soviet interests in the port safeguarded. A joint Soviet-Chinese company would be established to protect Moscow’s railway transit rights through Manchuria. The only proviso on this deal was that concessions relating to China would also have to be negotiated and agreed with the Chinese. But neither Stalin nor Roosevelt foresaw any great difficulty about this, and both assumed that the Chinese would be so grateful for Soviet entry into the war that any deal would be unproblematic.

On 11 February 1945 the Big Three met for the final time to approve a communiqué to be issued at the end of the conference. They quickly agreed on the text, and the statement was issued the same day in the names of Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. In it they announced their agreed policies vis-à-vis Germany, the United Nations, Poland, and Yugoslavia, and they also promulgated their Declaration on Liberated Europe that committed Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States to the destruction of Nazism and Fascism and the establishment of a democratic Europe based on free elections. In conclusion the three leaders pledged to maintain wartime unity and to create the conditions for a secure and lasting peace. The communiqué omitted mention of the decisions of the conference that the Big Three did not want to make

62. *Ibid.*, Doc. 12, pp. 128–131.

public—for example, in relation to the USSR's entry into the Far East war. These were set out instead in a confidential protocol.⁶³

Stalin had every reason to be pleased about the results of Yalta. On almost every policy issue the Soviet position had prevailed. The Big Three had worked well together once again, and Stalin had proven to be as effective a negotiator as he was at Tehran. The only major concession to Western wishes was the Declaration on Liberated Europe. But the Soviet interpretation of the document emphasized its anti-fascist rather than democratic character, and, in any case, Stalin was confident that his Communist allies across Europe would form part of the broad-based coalition governments envisaged in the declaration and would win the elections that followed. Soviet press coverage of the conference was predictably ecstatic.⁶⁴ Maiskii drafted for Molotov a confidential information telegram to be sent to Soviet embassies that concluded: "In general the atmosphere at the conference was friendly, and the feeling was one of striving for agreement on disputed questions. We assess the conference as highly positive, especially in relation to the Polish and Yugoslav questions and also the question of reparations."⁶⁵ In a private letter to Alexandra Kollantai, the Soviet ambassador in Sweden, Maiskii wrote that

the Crimean Conference was very interesting. Especially impressive was that our influence in general and that of Stalin personally was extraordinarily great. The decisions of the conference were 75 percent our decisions. . . . The cooperation of the "Big Three" is now very close and Germany has nothing to celebrate, neither during the war nor after it.⁶⁶

The Potsdam Conference

The Potsdam conference lasted for two weeks, from 17 July to 2 August 1945, far longer than the four days of Tehran and the week of discussions at Yalta. One reason for the length of the conference was a break at the end of July when Churchill flew home for the results of the British general election. He lost the election by a landslide and never returned to Potsdam. His and Eden's places at the conference table were taken by the new Labour prime minister, Clement Attlee, and his foreign minister, Ernest Bevin (although Attlee, as

63. *Ibid.*, Docs. 25, 28, pp. 245–253, 255–263.

64. "Istoricheskie resheniya Krymskoi konferentsii," *Pravda*, 13 February 1945, p. 1; and "Krymskaya konferentsiya rukovoditelei trekh soyuznykh derzhav," *Izvestiya*, 13 February 1945, p. 1.

65. Laufer and Kynin, eds., *SSSR i Germanskii vopros*, Doc. 144, pp. 606–608.

66. *Ivan Mikhailovich Maiskii: Izbrannaya perepiska s rossiiskimi korrespondentami*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), Vol. 2, Doc. 550, p. 161.

deputy prime minister, had accompanied Churchill to Potsdam). Another reason for the duration of the Potsdam conference was the number and type of issues discussed. In Tehran the main theme had been the coordination of military action against Germany, and at Yalta the talks were dominated by general perspectives on the postwar world. Potsdam was more like the Moscow conference of foreign ministers of October 1943 in that it focused on the specific resolution of particular issues: the future of Germany; peace treaties with enemy states; revision of the Montreux Convention on access to the Black Sea; the formation of territorial trusteeships to govern Italy's former colonies; and the establishment of procedures for the future conduct of Soviet-Western relations within the Grand Alliance, as well as a number of other issues. Stalin was keen to deal with all these questions as soon as possible because he worried that the benevolent glow of the common victory over Germany would not last much longer and that relations with his Anglo-American allies would become progressively more difficult after the war. Stalin also thought he had a trump card to play in the negotiations—that the Red Army was needed to help finish off Japan.

Stalin's first meeting at Potsdam was on 17 July with the new U.S. president, Harry Truman, who had succeeded Roosevelt after the latter's death in April 1945. Stalin began by apologizing for arriving a day late at the conference. He had been detained in Moscow by negotiations with the Chinese, and his doctors had forbidden him to fly to Berlin. After an exchange of pleasantries, Stalin listed the issues he would like them to discuss at the conference: the division of the German fleet, reparations, Poland, territorial trusteeships, and Francisco Franco's regime in Spain. Truman said he was happy to discuss these issues but added that the United States had its own items for the agenda, although he did not specify what these were. In response to Truman's statement that difficulties and differences of opinion were bound to arise during the negotiations, Stalin said that such problems were unavoidable but the important thing was to find a common language. Asked about Churchill, Truman said that he had seen him yesterday morning and that the prime minister was confident of victory in the British general election. Stalin commented that the English people would not forget the victory in the war and that they now believed the war was over and expected the United States and the Soviet Union to defeat Japan for them. This gave Truman an opportunity to point out that although the British had been actively participating in the war against Japan all along, the United States was still waiting for the USSR to join the fighting. Stalin replied that Soviet forces would be ready to launch their attack on the Japanese by the middle of August. This led to a final exchange in which Stalin indicated that he was sticking to the agreement at

Yalta on the terms of Soviet participation in the Far Eastern war and did not intend to demand anything more.⁶⁷

Stalin's conversation with Truman was friendly enough, although it did not match the bonhomie he had achieved with Roosevelt at Tehran and Yalta. But Truman was new to the job, was still feeling his way with Stalin, and, unlike his predecessor, had not engaged in a long wartime correspondence with the Soviet leader prior to meeting him. Indeed, Truman's initial dealings with Stalin had been dominated by an acrimonious post-Yalta wrangle about the political composition of the Polish Provisional Government—a dispute resolved only when Truman sent Roosevelt's confidant, Harry Hopkins, to Moscow in May 1945 to broker a deal with Stalin.⁶⁸

As might be expected, Stalin's conversation with Churchill at dinner the next evening was more amicable and, as usual, ranged far and wide. Stalin was confident that Churchill would win the election and predicted a parliamentary majority of 80 for the prime minister. Stalin also evinced admiration for the role of King George in unifying the British Empire, saying that "no one who was a friend of Britain would do anything to weaken the respect shown to the Monarchy." Churchill was equally effusive, saying that he would "welcome Russia as a great power on the sea" and that the USSR had a right of access to the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea, and the Pacific Ocean. On Eastern Europe, Stalin repeated earlier promises to Churchill that he would not seek to impose Soviet-style rule there, but he expressed disappointment at Western demands for changes to the governments of Bulgaria and Romania, especially when he was refraining from interfering in Greek affairs. Churchill mentioned difficulties in relation to Yugoslavia, pointing to the 50–50 arrangement he had made with Stalin in October 1944, but the Soviet leader protested that the share of influence in Yugoslavia was 90 percent British, 10 percent Yugoslavian and 0 percent Soviet. Stalin continued that Tito had a "partisan mentality and had done several things that he ought not to have done. The Soviet government often did not know what Marshal Tito was about to do." The positive tenor of the conversation was summed up by Churchill's remark toward the end of dinner that "the Three Powers gathered round the table were the strongest the world had ever seen, and it was their task to maintain the peace of the world."⁶⁹

67. *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 2, pp. 39–41. No American record of this Truman-Stalin conversation is currently available, apparently because Stalin's remark about Soviet participation in the war against Japan caused the transcript to be given a high security classification, dooming it to the netherworld of non-declassified documents. See *FRUS: Potsdam*, p. 43.

68. See Geoffrey Roberts, "Sexing Up the Cold War: New Evidence on the Molotov-Truman Talks of April 1945," *Cold War History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (April 2004), pp. 103–125.

69. DBPO, pp. 386–390. No Soviet record of this conversation is currently available.

The first plenary session at Potsdam was held on 17 July.⁷⁰ At Stalin's suggestion, Truman was elected chairman for the duration of the conference. The main item on the agenda was an exchange of views regarding the issues the three leaders wanted to discuss at the conference. Stalin's list was similar to the one he had presented to Truman at their bilateral meeting earlier that day. Again, the division of the German navy and merchant fleet was number one on his list, followed by reparations, the resumption of diplomatic relations with Germany's former satellites, and the position of the Franco regime in Spain. Stalin's order of priorities was interesting for a number of reasons. First, it reflected his always keen desire to obtain a fair share of war booty and his suspicion that the British, in particular, were trying to keep the Soviet Union from receiving a large percentage of German shipping. Second, Stalin had asserted on a number of occasions during the war that one of the defining features of a great power was a big fleet and that he was planning a significant postwar buildup of the Soviet navy. This required a share of the German navy as well as the Italian fleet (already agreed at Yalta) and port facilities in various parts of the world.⁷¹ Third, the demand for a share of the German fleet reflected Stalin's view that, with the war in Europe over, the Soviet Union should get its just rewards. "We want no gifts," Stalin told Truman and Churchill later in the conference, "but wish to know whether the principle is recognized, whether the Russian claim to a part of the German navy is considered legitimate."⁷² Stalin displayed a similar attitude on a number of other questions that came up at the conference. Justifying his demand for Königsberg, Stalin said, in a remark omitted from the published Soviet records, that:

We consider it necessary to have at the expense of Germany one ice-free port in the Baltic. I think that this port must serve Königsberg. It is only fair that the Russians, who have shed so much blood and lived through so much terror, should want to receive some lump of German territory that would give some small satisfaction from this war.⁷³

An equally serious issue of national pride concerned Soviet demands in relation to Turkey. In June 1945 the Soviet Union had demanded the return of

70. *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 3, pp. 41–51.

71. See the memoirs of the Soviet naval commissar, N. G. Kuznetsov, "Ot Yalty do Potsdama," in A. M. Samsonov, ed., *9 maya 1945 goda* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), pp. 215–238. See Kuznetsov, "Ot Yalty do Potsdama."

72. *The Tehran, Yalta, & Potsdam Conferences*, p. 173.

73. "Vystupleniya tov. Stalina I. V. na zasedaniyakh glav trekh pravitel'stva," in AVPRF, F. 07, Op. 10-2, Pap. 49, D. 2, L. 20. This document is a compilation of all of Stalin's remarks at Potsdam. The full Soviet stenogram of Potsdam may be found in AVPRF, F. 07, Op. 10-2, Pap. 49, D. 3. The statement quoted here was omitted from the published Soviet record of the conference. Cf. *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, p. 152.

the provinces of Kars and Ardahan to the USSR. These were areas of eastern Turkey with Armenian and Georgian populations and had been part of the Tsarist Empire and then Soviet Russia from 1878 to 1921 when a Soviet-Turkish treaty returned the two districts to Turkey. These Soviet territorial demands were, it seems, prompted by a suggestion from the Turkish ambassador that the Soviet Union and Turkey should sign a treaty of alliance. Molotov responded that before such an agreement could be concluded the frontier dispute about Kars and Ardahan needed to be resolved. He called for negotiations about the revision of the Montreux Convention and the establishment of Soviet military bases on the Dardanelles.⁷⁴ At Potsdam the USSR tabled a demand for joint control of the Black Sea Straits with Turkey, including provisions for Soviet military bases.⁷⁵ At the plenary session on 23 July, Stalin defended the Soviet position on Kars and Ardahan on ethnic grounds and said in relation to the Straits:

For a great power such as Russia the question of the Straits is of great significance. The Montreux Convention was directed against Russia, it was an agreement hostile to Russia. Turkey was given the right to close the Straits to our shipping not only during war but when there exists a threat of war, as defined by Turkey. An impossible position! Turkey can always show that such a threat exists and she can always close the Straits. We Russians have the same rights in relation to the Straits that the Japanese Empire did. This is ludicrous, but it is a fact. . . . Imagine the uproar there would be in England if such an agreement existed in relation to Gibraltar, or in America if such an agreement existed in relation to the Panama Canal. . . . You believe that a naval base on the Straits is unacceptable. Very well, then give me some other base where the Russian fleet would be able to carry out repairs and reequip itself and where, together with its allies, it would be able to defend Russia's rights. That is the way it is. But to leave things as they are now is ridiculous.⁷⁶

Stalin's allusion to a naval base elsewhere was a reference to another issue of prestige he raised at Potsdam: the demand for Soviet participation in the administration of the Trusteeship Territories that were to supersede Italy's colonies in North Africa. The background to this demand was a longstanding American proposal that the League of Nations mandate system for overseeing the transition of former colonies to independence should be replaced by a trusteeship system. At the San Francisco conference in June 1945, Gromyko and Stettinius exchanged correspondence indicating that the United States

74. N. V. Kochkin, "SSSR, Angliya, SShA i 'Turetskii Krizis' 1945–1947 gg," *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya*, No. 3, (2002), pp. 58–77. For further treatment of Soviet policy in relation to Turkey, see Jamil Hasanli, *SSSR-Turtsiya: Poligon Kholodnoi Voiny* (Baku: Adilogly, 2005).

75. *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 63, pp. 326–327. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

would support Soviet participation in the proposed trusteeship system.⁷⁷ This was encouraging for Stalin, and at Potsdam he and Molotov proposed that they discuss whether territories taken into trusteeship should be managed collectively by the Big Three or by individual countries responsible for separate territories. The three leaders eventually agreed to refer this issue to the first meeting of the newly created Council of Foreign Ministers, scheduled to meet in London in September.⁷⁸ After Potsdam, the Soviet Union hardened its position on the trusteeship issue and decided to demand that Tripolitania (western Libya) should become a Soviet trust territory, allowing Stalin to establish port facilities in the Mediterranean. Stalin and Molotov were quite open about their self-interested aims in relation to Tripolitania and saw nothing wrong with this, although they did emphasize that their intention was to establish merchant fleet facilities.⁷⁹

At Potsdam a number of questions were raised and then tabled for future discussion by the Big Three's foreign ministers. But some pressing issues had to be discussed and decided by the three leaders themselves. First and foremost was the question of Germany's future, which was debated during several plenary sessions and by the foreign ministers and specialist working commissions of lower-ranking officials. The most difficult issue was that of reparations. At Yalta the three sides had agreed in principle that the Soviet Union would receive reparations from Germany, and Maiskii had referred to at least \$10 billion. The reparations were to be extracted in kind by the dismantlement of German industry and infrastructure and by deliveries from current production. The difficulty was that German industry was located mostly in the Western-occupied areas of the country such as the Ruhr region. The British and Americans, who were none too keen on reparations anyway, feared that they would end up having to meet Soviet reparations demands by deliveries from their zones. Their preference was for the Soviet Union to extract reparations exclusively from its own zone of occupation in Germany and, if there were to be reparations deliveries from the Western zones, these should be in exchange for agricultural products from the Soviet zone. In the end, the sides agreed that 10 percent of German industry would be removed from the

77. B. I. Zhilyaev, ed., *Sovetsko-amerikanskije otnosheniya, 1939–1945* (Moscow: Materik, 2004), Docs. 324, 326, 342, pp. 704–705, 706–707, 725–726.

78. *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, pp. 131–134, 310–311, 380, 421–422, 442, 461.

79. See the following documents prepared by Litvinov: "O territorial'noi opeke," 23 February 1945, "K voprosu o poluchenii Podopechnykh Territorii," 22 June 1945, "Dopolnitel'nye soobrazheniya po voprosu o Podopechnykh territoriyakh," 28 June 1945, and "Kolonial'nye vladeniya Italii," 8 August 1954, in AVPRF, F. 0431/1, Op. 1, Pap. 5, D. 33, Ll. 1–30. See also "Direktivnye ukazaniya sovetsoi delegatsii" (Instructions to the Soviet delegation to the London Conference of Foreign Ministers), September 1945, in AVPRF, F. 0431/1, Op. 1, D. 1, Ll. 1–16; and Sergei Mazov, "The USSR and the Former Italian Colonies, 1945–1950," *Cold War History*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (April 2003), pp. 49–78.

Western zones in partial payment of Soviet reparations and another 15 percent would be dismantled and shipped east in exchange for food and raw materials. Equally important from Stalin's perspective was the provision mandating Germany's "complete disarmament and demilitarization" and the elimination of its war potential. Stalin's views on the long-term danger of a German revival were well-rehearsed and came to the fore once again in an exchange with Truman on 21 July about the utility of shifting Poland's border with Germany as far west as possible:

Stalin: Of course the proposal . . . to shift the frontier westward will create difficulties for Germany. I do not object to the claim that it will create difficulties for Germany. Our task is to create more difficulties for Germany. . . .

Truman: But it is not good to create difficulties for the allies as well.

Stalin: The less industry in Germany, the greater the outlets for your goods. Germany will not be competing with your goods. Is that so bad? It seems very good to me. We take the state that threatens peace and peaceful competition and force it to its knees. . . . There are difficulties for Germany here, but we must not be afraid of them.⁸⁰

Alongside the German question, Poland's western border with Germany provoked the most extensive discussion at Potsdam. At Yalta, the Big Three had agreed that Poland would be compensated for territorial losses to the Soviet Union by gains at Germany's expense. But no agreement had been reached on the precise frontier, and the parties differed in their views of how far west the German-Polish border should be pushed. Those differences were compounded by the fact that the Soviet Union controlled all the German territory in question and had handed it over to Polish administrative control. The Poles had begun expelling Germans en masse from the area and resettling it in anticipation that it would become part of Poland, causing problems for the British and Americans in their zones of occupation in Germany.

The discussion of this issue at Potsdam was one of the rare occasions when Stalin was tactically outsmarted in a diplomatic negotiation. Early in the conference both Truman and Churchill raised the question of how the concept of "Germany" was to be defined. Stalin said that Germany should be considered either a purely geographical concept or should be taken "as it is in 1945." But the Soviet leader made the mistake of agreeing that "Germany" referred to the state that existed before 1937 (i.e., before Hitler annexed Austria and seized the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia). This concession enabled

80. "Vystupleniya tov. Stalina I.V. na zasedaniyakh glav trekh pravitel'stv," Ll. 16–17. This statement was omitted from the published Soviet record of the conference. See *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, p. 152.

Truman and Churchill to argue later that activities in the German territories handed over to the Poles were an inter-Allied matter, not a bilateral issue in Soviet-Polish relations, insofar as Germany was under joint Allied occupation. Stalin countered that this territory had come under de facto Polish control because the Germans had fled west, but he had no real answer to the argument that the German-Polish border was a matter to be determined by a peace conference. However, by the end of the conference, the three sides had agreed on a demarcation line between Germany and Poland, and the British and Americans had accepted Polish administration of the German territories in question “pending the final determination of Poland’s western frontier” at a future peace conference.

A third area of contention at Potsdam concerned Big Three relations with Germany’s erstwhile allies during the Second World War—Italy, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, and Romania. The British and Americans sought special treatment for Italy, and Stalin strove to protect the interests of the countries that fell within his sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The argument began with a Western proposal that Italy be admitted as a member of the UN. Stalin did not object, but said he could not see why the four other ex-enemy states should not be treated in the same way. The British and Americans replied that they did not have diplomatic relations with those countries and therefore could not consider their admission to the UN until peace treaties had been signed. The three leaders finally accepted a compromise to give priority to the negotiation and signing of a peace treaty with Italy that would lead to the country’s admission to the UN. Soviet sensibilities were assuaged by a commitment from the British and Americans to consider recognizing the governments of Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, and Romania.

At the conclusion of the Potsdam conference on 2 August 1945, the participants declared that the talks had “strengthened the ties . . . and extended the scope of their collaboration and understanding” and had renewed their confidence in their ability to deliver “a just and enduring peace.” The conference communiqué went on to announce, first, the establishment of a Council of Foreign Ministers that would serve as a permanent forum of tripartite collaboration and, second, plans for postwar Germany, including policy on reparation payments. The declaration touched on a number of other decisions such as the transfer of Königsberg to the USSR and the agreement on Poland’s western border. The final communiqué also paved the way for the admission of more countries to the UN, including ones that had remained neutral throughout the war. A specific exception to this provision was made for Franco’s Spain on the grounds that his regime had been founded with the support of the aggressor states and had maintained a close association with them during the war. With a view to undermining Franco’s regime, Stalin and Mol-

otov had proposed much stronger action, but the British and Americans declined to go further than keeping Spain out of the UN.⁸¹ In addition to the public communiqué, an unpublished conference protocol dealt with matters such as the tripartite disposal of the German navy and merchant marine and the need to revise the regime governing the Black Sea straits.⁸²

The Soviet Union's assessment of Potsdam was very positive, both publicly and privately. The Soviet press offered the same adulatory assessment of the conference that it had bestowed on Tehran and Yalta.⁸³ The Soviet leaders' confidential statements, as recorded by the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, show that the press reports reflected their genuine sentiments:

According to Molotov and Vyshinskii at the conference it was possible to see, and to see in its results, that the English and Americans accept that they have lost Eastern Europe and the Balkans. . . . Molotov said that throughout the conference there was a good atmosphere, albeit not without harsh polemics and sharp words. Everyone tried to ensure that all questions were resolved by compromise decisions. . . . About Truman they said he was quite cultured and shows much understanding of European problems.⁸⁴

Similar comments were recorded in the diary of the influential Communist official Georgi Dimitrov: "I spoke with Molotov about the [Potsdam] conference, and in particular about decisions affecting Bulgaria and the Balkans. Basically, these decisions are to our [the Communists'] advantage. In effect, this sphere of influence has been recognized as ours."⁸⁵ In a report circulated to Soviet ambassadors, Molotov wrote that "the conference ended with quite satisfactory results for the Soviet Union."⁸⁶

The only really jarring note during the Potsdam negotiations concerned the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan. When Stalin told Truman that he would be ready to attack Japan by the middle of August, the U.S. President was delighted: "I've gotten what I came for," he confided to his wife on

81. See Enrique Moradiellos, "The Potsdam Conference and the Spanish Problem," *Contemporary European History*, Vol.10, No.1, (March 2001), pp. 73–90; and Geoffrey Swain, "Stalin and Spain, 1944–1948" in Christian Leitz and David J. Dunthorn, eds., *Spain in an International Context, 1936–1959* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), pp. 245–264.

82. *The Tehran, Yalta, & Potsdam Conferences*, pp. 317–341.

83. See, for example, the front-page editorials titled "Berlinskaya konferentsiya trekh derzhav" published in both *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* on 3 August 1945.

84. Cited in L. Ya. Gibianskii, "Doneseniya yugoslavskogo posla v Moskve ob otsenkakh rukovodstvom SSSR Potsdamskoi konferentsii i polozheniya v Vostochnoi Evrope," *Slavyanovedenie*, No. 1 (1994), p. 32.

85. *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933–1939*, trans. by Jane T. Hedges, Timothy D. Sergay, and Irina Faion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 377.

86. Ralph B. Levering et al., *Debating the Origins of the Cold War: American and Russian Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 105.

18 July. “Stalin goes to war August 15 with no strings on it. . . . I’ll say that we’ll end the war a year sooner now, and think of the kids who won’t be killed. That’s the important thing.”⁸⁷ However, U.S. views of the Soviet Union’s entry into the Far Eastern war were in flux as a result of the successful testing of the nuclear bomb on 18 July and accumulating signs that the Japanese were increasingly willing to negotiate the terms of their surrender.⁸⁸ Truman’s changing stance was indicated by his handling of the Potsdam Proclamation of 26 July 1945. This was a public statement by Britain, China, and the United States calling on Japan to surrender unconditionally or face “prompt and utter destruction.” The original American draft of the declaration included the Soviet Union among the signatories and stated that the “vast military might of the Soviet Union” had been added to the arsenals of Britain, China, and the United States.⁸⁹ But on 26 July, Truman’s new secretary of state, James Byrnes, sent Molotov a copy of a new text of the declaration that omitted these references.⁹⁰ Soviet officials immediately got to work producing their own draft declaration, which read:

The time has come when the governments of the allied democratic countries, the USA, China, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, have recognized the necessity of declaring their attitude to Japan.

Eight years ago, Japan attacked China and since then has conducted a bloody war against the Chinese people. After that, Japan treacherously attacked the United States and Great Britain, beginning a war of brigandage in the Pacific. And this time Japan used the same method of perfidious surprise attack that it used forty years ago when attacking Russia.

Plunging into war, Japan tried to exploit the situation that had emerged as a result of Hitler’s aggression in Europe. The tenacious resistance of the Chinese people and the courageous struggle of the American and British armed forces upset the predatory plans of Japanese militarists.

Like Hitler’s Germany in the West, the belligerent Japan has caused, and continues to cause, countless disasters to peace-loving peoples. Despite the defeat of Germany and the end of the war in Europe, Japan continues to drag out the bloody war in the Far East. The calamities of peoples and the victims of war continue to grow, despite the futility of prolonging the war. It is impossible to tolerate this situation any longer.

Throughout the world the peoples are full of a desire to put an end to a war that has dragged on and on. The United States, China, Great Britain, and the

87. Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

88. See Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

89. *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Doc. 231, pp. 550–552.

90. *Potsdamskaya konferentsiya*, Doc. 97, pp. 357–359.

Soviet Union consider it their duty to come forward with joint decisive measures that ought to lead to an end to the war.

Japan should understand that further resistance is futile and presents the greatest danger for the Japanese people themselves. Japan must end the war, lay down its arms, and surrender unconditionally.⁹¹

Just before midnight, the Soviet delegation phoned the Americans to ask them to postpone publication of the proclamation for three days. Fifteen minutes later, however, the Soviet delegates were informed that the statement had already been released to the press.⁹² The subsequent American explanation for this process of non-consultation was that U.S. officials had assumed that the Soviet Union, which was still neutral, would not want to get involved in such a statement—a rather lame excuse. Stalin showed his annoyance by pointedly mentioning at the plenary session on 28 July that “he had not been informed beforehand of the call to surrender published by the British and American governments.”⁹³ Even so, Stalin did not give up the idea of a public show of Allied solidarity in advance of the Soviet attack on Japan. He suggested to Truman that Britain and the United States should issue a statement inviting the Soviet Union to enter the war in the Far East. Truman responded by suggesting that the Moscow declaration on general security issued in October 1943 and the as yet unratified UN Charter provided sufficient formal grounds for Soviet entry into the war. This response was hardly satisfactory from Stalin’s viewpoint. On 8 August, when the Soviet government declared war on Japan, Soviet officials justified their action by using the pretext of Japan’s failure to comply with the Potsdam Proclamation.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that the Soviet records of Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam are a rich source of evidence on Stalin’s policy within the Grand Alliance, particularly when combined with the British and American documents on the three summits. The Soviet transcripts underline the extent to which the Soviet dictator was fully and genuinely committed to tripartite cooperation with Britain and the United States during the war and had a strong pref-

91. Cited in David Holloway, “Jockeying for Position in the Postwar World: Soviet Entry into the War with Japan in August 1945,” in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, ed., *Reinterpreting the End of the Pacific War: Atomic Bombs and the Soviet Entry into the War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

92. S. L. Tikhvinskii et al., eds., *Russko-Kitaiskie otnosheniya v XX veke: Materialy i dokumenty*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Pamyatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2000), Vol. 4, Bk. 2, Doc. 685, p. 146.

93. *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, p. 959.

erence for the continuation of this relationship in peacetime. The unpublished Soviet records further enrich this picture of Stalin's engagement with the Grand Alliance and confirm assumptions about aspects of his policy hitherto deduced from the British and American transcripts of the conferences. This is particularly true in relation to the German question. Historians have long argued that during the war Stalin favored highly punitive treatment of postwar Germany, but the doctoring of the published Soviet records of Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam had cast doubt on this interpretation. We can now see from the unexpurgated Soviet record that Stalin was indeed highly committed to dismemberment of Germany and pushed his coalition partners to adopt a concrete plan of implementation. Stalin was convinced that German power would revive within fifteen to twenty years and that the best way to deal with this eventuality was to divide the country and keep it divided by the combined efforts of the Grand Alliance. But at Yalta, when Stalin faced a lukewarm attitude toward dismemberment on the part of Churchill and Roosevelt, he responded by dropping his advocacy of dismemberment. In March 1945, Fedor Gusev, the chief Soviet representative at the Commission on Dismemberment established by the Yalta conference, was instructed that the conference's decision in principle to support dismemberment was not binding—a change of policy justified by Molotov on grounds that Britain and the United States were trying to saddle the USSR with the sole responsibility for dismemberment.⁹⁴ From then on, Stalin spoke publicly and privately only about a united Germany—disarmed, demilitarized, denazified, and democratized, but not dismembered.

The political motives behind this deliberate obfuscation of Stalin's views on the German question are self-evident, and the same applies to the other omissions and changes to the published Soviet records. For example, when the Soviet Union began publishing its records in the 1960s, de Gaulle was back in power in France, and Soviet officials were hopeful that Franco-Soviet relations would improve dramatically. The omission of statements by Stalin that might have offended French sensibilities was presumably deemed more important than the imperative of historical accuracy. In relation to Greece, the Soviet editors were seeking to cover up the politically embarrassing fact that Stalin had accepted that the country fell within a British sphere of influence when he signed the percentages deal with Churchill in October 1944. Similarly, the idea that Stalin was perfectly willing to go to war with Bulgaria in support of Turkey if the Turks ended their neutrality would not have played well in Sofia—the capital of the Soviet Union's most reliable East-bloc ally. A more trivial example in the same vein concerns Stalin's use at Potsdam

94. Laufer and Kynin, eds., *SSSR i germanskii vopros*, Vol. 1, Doc. 154, p. 626.

of the term *satellites* when referring to Hitler's East European allies. In the published record this term was changed to *former associates* of Germany or similar neutral terminology.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that the published Soviet record of the three conferences is mostly accurate and can be used with confidence by scholars. Very few portions of the hundreds of pages of conference transcripts in the Russian Foreign Ministry archive have been omitted or altered. This is not really surprising, given that too much "editing" would have undermined the credibility and plausibility of the published Soviet texts. The Soviet editors also had to bear in mind that alternative records of the conference were readily available. The American records had been published years earlier, and by the time the fuller versions of the Soviet records were published in the 1970s the 30-year rule had been introduced in relation to the British archives. Moreover, a precedent for the accurate rendition of archival records had been set in the early 1950s by the Soviet editors of Stalin's wartime correspondence with Churchill, Roosevelt, Truman, and Attlee. They had decided to publish the full texts of Stalin's correspondence—warts and all—although the material was not published until after Stalin's death. In that case the decision to publish a full record was constrained by the existence in British and American archives of the actual texts of the messages exchanged.⁹⁵ The Soviet editors of the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam transcripts were able to be more selective in their publication, secure (or so they thought) in the knowledge that only they would have access to their archival records. This meant that any differences that turned up when comparisons were made with the British and American records could be plausibly denied. Even so, only in relation to Soviet policy on the German question did the editors do great damage to the historical record—a transgression that it is now possible to correct.

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95. On the background to the publication of Stalin's correspondence in 1957, see Geoffrey Roberts, "Stalin, the Pact with Nazi Germany, and the Origins of Postwar Soviet Diplomatic Historiography," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Fall 2002), pp. 93–103.