

The Yalta Conference, 1945:
Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin.



What were the crucial developments that took place between the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences?

There were some crucial events that radically changed the atmosphere of, and the influences on, the next meeting of the Allies in 1945.

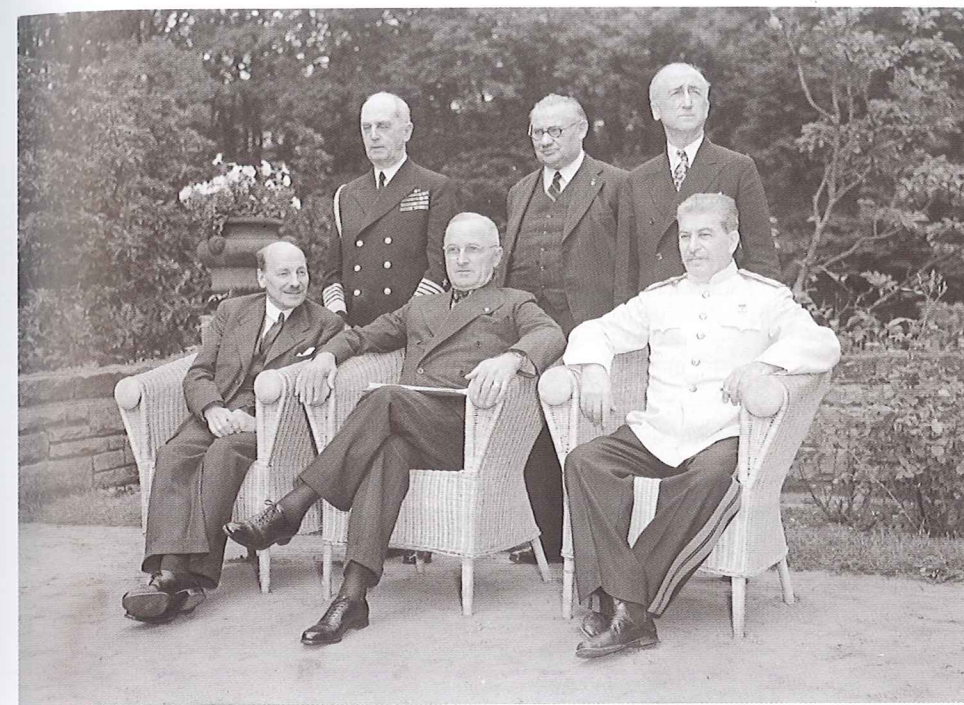
- President Roosevelt died in April 1945 and was replaced by Truman, who was to adopt a more hardline, or 'get tough', policy towards the Soviets.
- Germany finally surrendered unconditionally on 7 May 1945.
- Winston Churchill's Conservative Party lost the 1945 UK general election and Churchill was succeeded as Prime Minister by the Labour Party leader, Clement Atlee.
- As the war in Europe ended, the Soviet Red Army occupied territory as far west as deep inside Germany.
- On the very day after the Potsdam Conference began, 17 July 1945, the United States successfully tested its first atomic bomb.

The Potsdam Conference, 1945

The Potsdam Conference took place in July 1945 in Potsdam, Germany. Those participating were Josef Stalin representing the USSR, President Harry S Truman representing the USA and Prime Minister Clement Atlee representing the UK.

The state of the war: In May 1945, Germany surrendered 'unconditionally'. Although war in the Pacific raged on, the Americans were now poised to invade the mainland. By the time the Potsdam Conference began, the USA was planning to use their new atomic weapon against Japan – if the tests on it proved successful.

Germany: The Allies had agreed at Yalta to disarm, demilitarize, de-Nazify and divide Germany, but at Potsdam they could not agree how this should be done. Finally it was decided that they would carry out the de-Nazification and demilitarization of Germany in their own ways in their own respective zones of occupation. The German economy was to be run as a 'whole', but it was to be limited to domestic industry and agriculture (at 74 per cent of 1936 levels). The Soviets were to receive 25 per cent of their reparation bill from the Western zones. The more agricultural Eastern zone was to give food in exchange.



The Potsdam Conference,
1945: seated are Atlee,
Truman and Stalin.

Poland: The new U.S. president, Harry S Truman, was not happy with the agreements over Poland, so he challenged the decision over the new western frontier between Poland and Germany (the Oder-Neisse line). Truman also insisted that the Polish government be 're-organized'. In other words the Americans wanted an entirely new government. They did not feel that there had been a 'free and democratic' vote, and Stalin's offer to include more 'London' Poles within the predominantly 'Lublin'-led government did not appease the USA.

Eastern Europe: The new U.S. leadership was also unhappy about the so-called 'Percentages Agreement' that had been made **bilaterally** between Stalin and Churchill in October 1944 (see page 18). Spheres of influence had been discussed in terms of 'percentages' when deciding the future fate of countries in East and South-eastern Europe. Truman challenged the influence that this agreement had given Stalin over Romania and Bulgaria. However, Soviet military control of Eastern Europe was a fact – the Red Army was literally standing on the territories. Thus, it was very difficult for the West to force Stalin to make any changes. Truman did not want to see Eastern Europe become a Soviet 'sphere of influence', but without threatening to push the Red Army back with ground forces there was little practically that the United States could do. The Red Army from the East, which had come to liberate the area from the Nazis, was beginning to look like an army of 'occupation' to the Americans.

Japan: Truman was told during this conference that the atomic bomb tests had been successful. On 6 August 1945 the first atomic bomb used in war was dropped on Hiroshima. Three days later another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Soon after the Japanese finally agreed to 'unconditional surrender'. However, although the Americans liaised with their British allies, Truman did not tell Stalin the 'full story' about this new 'super weapon'. And, for the first time, at this conference the Americans did not encourage the Soviets to join in the war against Japan.

United Nations: The United Nations became a reality. It was officially created at the Treaty of San Francisco in 1945. The USSR was the only Communist power of the 'Big 5' (the USA, the USSR, France, Britain and Nationalist China), who were the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Stalin used the power of veto this gave the USSR to block any initiatives that he perceived to be against Soviet interests.

Conclusions: There were two positive outcomes from the Potsdam Conference:

- agreement for the immediate, practical control of the defeated Germany
- the establishment of the United Nations.

The Percentages Agreement of October 1944

On 9 October 1944, at a meeting in Moscow, Stalin and Churchill devised what is known as the 'Percentages Agreement', which relates to influence and control the Western Powers and the USSR would want to have in various areas after the defeat of Germany. Churchill apparently was concerned that it would appear rather cynical that the two leaders scribbled the fate of millions on a piece of paper. He suggested to Stalin that he burn the paper it was written on. 'No, you keep it,' said Stalin.

Romania	Greece	Yugoslavia	Hungary	Bulgaria
• Russia 90%	• United Kingdom 90%	• 50% – 50%	• 50% – 50%	• Russia 75%
• Others 10%	(in accord with USA)			• Others 25%
	• Russia 10%			

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Review questions

- 1 Look over the issues that were discussed at the three conferences. Which issues were satisfactorily resolved?
- 2 Which decisions were likely to cause tension in the future?
- 3 From what you have read so far in both Chapters 1 and 2, what do you consider to be the 'seeds' of East–West conflict that were sown from 1917 onwards?

Key developments 1946–1947

Before moving on to Step Two it is important to look at some key developments that were to have an impact on U.S.–Soviet relations.

Salami tactics

One way the Soviet Union gained increasing political control over Eastern Europe was by the method known as 'salami tactics'. This term is said to have come from a remark made by the Hungarian Communist leader, Rakosi, commenting on how the USSR secured Communist control in Eastern Europe, 'like slicing off salami, piece by piece':

- Stage One: The Soviets supervised the organization of governments in the Eastern European states, initially establishing a broad alliance of 'anti-fascists'.
- Stage Two: Each of the parties was 'sliced off', one after the other.
- Stage Three: The Communist 'core' was left, and then ultimately the local Communists were replaced (if need be) with Moscow-trained people.

By the end of 1946, the so-called 'Baggage Train' leaders had returned to Eastern Europe. These were the men who had spent much of the war in Moscow, and were considered by the Soviets to be 'trustworthy', for example, Bierut (who returned to Poland), Kolarov (who returned to Bulgaria), Pauker (who returned to Romania) and Rakosi (who returned to Hungary). These leaders would thus ensure that the post-war governments of their respective countries would be dominated by Moscow-backed, 'Stalinist' Communists.

Case study: Poland The 'free elections' promised by Stalin at Yalta to occur in a matter of 'weeks', were not held until 19 January 1947. Before the elections there had been a campaign of murder, censorship and intimidation. It is estimated that over 50,000 people were deported to Siberia before the elections.

During the elections in January, Mikolajczyk's Polish Peasant Party had 246 candidates disqualified; 149 were arrested and 18 murdered. One million voters were taken off the electoral register for some reason or another. As Desmond Donnelly contends in his book *Struggle for the World*, 'In these appalling circumstances of intimidation, it was not surprising that Bierut's Communists secured complete control in Poland'.

The Soviet perspective on these elections was quite different from that of the West, where they were seen as a breach of the Yalta agreements. The Soviets, however, saw them as a victory over 'Western expansionism'.

The political goals set by Mikolajczyk in cahoots with Churchill required that Warsaw be liberated (by British and American) forces before the Soviet army reached the city. That way a pro-Western government supported by Mikolajczyk would already be in control of the city by the time the Soviets arrived. But it didn't work out that way. Our troops under Rokossovsky got there first.

Nikita Khrushchev in Khrushchev Remembers, Volume One (Little, Brown and Co., 1970)

This pattern of securing Soviet-Communist-style governments was emerging in the other Eastern European countries that the Red Army had occupied at the end of World War Two – Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. In Czechoslovakia and Finland there remained only a semblance of democracy.

Soviet pressure on Iran

Another place in which the USSR tried to increase its political control in the aftermath of the war was Iran. At the Tehran Conference, it had been agreed that both the British and the Soviets would withdraw their troops from Iran after the war. The UK took its troops out, but Stalin left 30,000 of his in the north, claiming that they were needed there to help put down internal rebellion.

However, these Soviet troops encouraged a Communist uprising, and the Iranian government complained to the USSR's former allies. The British and Americans demanded that Stalin remove his troops immediately. They also saw this as another breach in the wartime agreements. On 1 January 1946, Stalin refused. He believed that after the war he had as much right to the Black Sea Straits and to Iranian oil as did his former allies. Four days later, Truman wrote to his Secretary of State, James Byrnes. In this letter Truman revealed that he thought the USSR was planning an invasion of Turkey and the Black Sea Straits. He also wrote, '... unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language, war is in the making'. In March the United Nations had its first crisis to deal with – Iran. Iran had made a formal protest to the UN concerning the continued presence of Soviet forces. Under this new pressure, Moscow finally pulled its troops out.

Instability in Greece and Turkey

After World War Two there were anti-imperialist, nationalist and, to a certain extent, 'pro-Communist' rebellions in Greece and Turkey. The British, and to a lesser degree the USA, believed that these rebellions were being directed and supported by the Soviets. Churchill, in particular, was annoyed at Stalin's apparent disregard for their 'Percentages Agreement'.

Communist parties in Italy and France

Communist parties in both these 'Western democracies' grew stronger in post-war Europe, their membership increasing due to the economic deprivations and hardships at the end of the war in Europe. The Americans and the British were suspicious that these newly popular Communist parties were receiving 'encouragement' from Moscow. Indeed there was concern that Italy and France could be 'weak links' in anti-Communist Western Europe.