

YALTA AND POTSDAM CONFERENCES - THE PREMISES OF THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

In the 20th century, no state other than the United States of America had such a profound impact on people's lives. Germany unwittingly aided American supremacy in half of Europe and in the world. During the first half of the 20th century, Germany fell victim to its idea for inaccessible greatness. The violence created by the ideology of the "chosen nation" and of the "superior race" has created a memorable tragedy in the human consciousness. From year 1945 up to year 1990, Germany helped make the world fairer. It was completely destroyed by World War II and found itself in the center of the Cold War vortex. It didn't matter where the ideological adversaries would clash during the Cold War, there was always Germany in mind, and even the Cold War itself began for its own sake. Each of the three powers had brought in Yalta its own priorities. The British wanted to maintain their empire, the Soviets to strengthen and seal their conquests in Europe and go as far as the Far East and the Americans to put Russia in the Pacific war. The fate of Europe occupied almost the whole second day of discussions. The military of the three countries have presented the map, to how the areas of influence were to be divided and how the states, especially Germany, was transformed.

Keywords: Impact, Yalta, Cold War.

INTRODUCTION

It was inevitable for Germany to not make a serious mistake in international relations. It was created on January 18, 1871 in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles by Otto von Bismarck the so-called Iron Chancellor. To be created as a state, Germany had to undertake three wars with three states; with Denmark, with Austria and with France. In an attempt to establish world hegemony, Germany involved the globe in two horrific world wars in the first half of the 20th century. In both has failed. Adolph Hitler was not Bismarck. Many scholars think that Hitler was the "offspring" of the Bismarckian mentality that has characterized Germany from the late XIX century up to the year 1945. Germany was going from one disaster to another and in these disasters it was also including Europe and a good part of the world. The end of the year 1944 showed that Germany was on the verge of total collapse. Its leader Adolph Hitler who had predicted that the German Reich built by him would have existed for a thousand of years, was seeing its end. General German withdrawals to the Soviet Union, North Africa and Europe were the prelude to an imminent catastrophe for the country. But Hitler has continued the war as a third level chess player who does not accept the defeat until he is caught.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this historical research is to reach conclusions about past persons or occurrences. Historical research entails more than simply compiling and presenting factual information; it also requires interpretation of the information. Researches cannot accept

historical data at face value. Historical data has to be examined for its authenticity and truthfulness. Such examination could be done through criticism. The task is to locate and interrogate appropriate sources for the reconstruction of an era. It is important to recognize the different sources used by historians and the value which can be placed upon them. Therefore, we must recognize the outlook of the source and take it into account when using it as evidence.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE WORLD DIVISION AFTER THE END OF THE WAR

The Agreement of late October of the year 1944 between Churchill and Stalin over the division in Eastern Europe had convinced the British leader that another language had to be used with Stalin. As the end of the Napoleon Bonaparte era, England became the promoter of a new system of international relations that would guarantee post-war peace. The leaders of the great alliance have met each other even in the year 1943 in Tehran, this time they agreed to meet again to decide on the fate of Germany and its allies. At the beginning of the year 1945, the Western allies (US and UK) had nothing in common with the Soviet Union except the desire to defeat the Axis powers. Each of these three powers had its own interests. Roosevelt was a more far too idealistic even though his political career had been brilliant as a result of the pragmatism. Like most Americans, he believed that the world should no longer be divided into areas of influence. He did not share the same opinion with his secretary of state Cordell Hall (Hull) that global problems could be resolved by improving the League of Nations. A new gathering among the three great allies was on the horizon. None of the three had any doubts about the eventual victory. The meeting was necessary as it would decide the fate of the world. Roosevelt was aware that in the summer of the year 1944 he would meet again with Churchill and Stalin.

In foreign policy, President Roosevelt was more cautious after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He trusted the military more than his diplomats. The chief of the Army's General Staff, General Marshall, was the person Roosevelt heard the most. General Marshall has described Roosevelt in the following words: "*Under great stress, Roosevelt was a strong man*". He had agreed with his general's view that post-war political demands should be aligned with the needs of victory. In his mind continued to exist the thought that it was useless to deal with the postwar as the war continued. If this was the case, Stalin would win both militarily and politically. Based on the good fortune of the West, Roosevelt would not be alone when he was going to meet Stalin to decide how the world would be after the war. Winston Churchill was the man who had thought in the same way as Stalin of what would happen when the war was over. His entire political career was an intersection between idealism and pragmatism. The British prime minister was an excellent orator besides a gifted writer. His oratory helped in uniting the British people in his darkest day of the Hitlerian threat. Like the US president, the British prime minister wanted the Soviet Union to be part of the grand alliance until the end of the war. Churchill was convinced that Stalin had none of Roosevelt's democratic principles, but this was not the point. The Soviet Union had to be kept in the war until the final victory. For Germany all three leaders agreed. The capitulation had to be unconditional. Great Britain and the Soviet Union demanded guarantees in the future that their countries would no longer be threatened by German attacks. To save Europe from the German threat, since the Tehran Conference of the year 1943, Roosevelt had proposed to divide Germany into five parts: 1. Northeast Prussia; 2. Hanover and the lower part of northwest Germany; 3. Saxony and the Leipzig area to the east; 4. Hesse-Darmstadt and Hesse Kassel in the west; 5. Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg in the south. Initially, Churchill agreed with President Roosevelt's plan, but has added that the most important issue was to treat Prussia rigorously. On his part, Stalin said that he liked the idea of Germany division, but before its

approval, he needed to deeply study the problem. From their side, Roosevelt and Churchill wanted to avoid the mistake made by their ancestors in Versailles in the year 1919. According to them, it was precisely this great mistake that has helped Adolph Hitler and the Nazis to come to power. The "Versailles teachings" put some disagreement among the great allies in their next meeting. On one hand, Germany and Hitler with Nazis has to be punished for the war and its consequences. If this was the case, Germany and Nazis would be put in a same range, and again this would not serve to have long-term peace, and again the Germans would become a problem for the world as a result of their re-emergence into political extremism.

Despite the political suspicions that have characterized the Allied states, another doubt that has followed them was where the three greats would meet. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, seeing that the situation on the eastern front was in the favor of the Soviet Union, refusing to leave from Russia. US President Roosevelt on his side, was reluctant to go to a communist country before the presidential election. Upon winning, he and his closest adviser, Harry Hopkins, met with Soviet Ambassador Andrei Gromiko to tell him they were ready to meet on Soviet land where Stalin has expressed his desire. Hopkins agreed that the leaders would meet in Crimea. Stalin agreed. In his memoirs Hopkins wrote: *"All of the president's closest advisers were against his return to Crimea. Most of them did not trust the Russians and did not understand why the President of the United States had to pass half of the world to meet Stalin"*.

Churchill also disagreed. Soon the Americans understood why Churchill did not want to go to Yalta. According to the British Prime Minister, Livadia Palace, where it had been previously decided that the meeting would be held, had passed several times during the war at the hands of the Germans and Russians. Upon withdrawal, the Germans have erase the place and have blow up the old palace built by Nicholas II (last Russian tsar). The new palace built by the Soviets was swarming from the chimneys (eavesdropper) and Churchill hated that. Roosevelt had accepted this place as it was very suitable for the polio disease that he was suffering from. Roosevelt drove a real "calvary" along the way to Yalta. He had to travel by plane, boat and car. His first stop was in Malta, where US and British troops had taken all measures to welcome the president. In Malta has arrived as well Churchill and the two men stayed on the island long enough to have lunch and dinner and to be coordinated, but not enough to make Stalin suspect for their stop. Roosevelt first arrived in Yalta on the evening of February 3, 1945. Stalin arrived the next morning. On February 4, 1945, Stalin solemnly invited President Roosevelt to open the conference in the magnificent ballroom in the Livadia Palace. Churchill and his entourage agreed with Stalin's proposal. President Roosevelt thanked the Soviet leader for his kindness and has stated that: *"... there is plenty of room for discussion, the whole map of Europe"*. With a gentleman's agreement, the first day of the conference was solely focused on the war against Germany. Stalin invited General Alexei Antonov to present a report on the progress of the war on the eastern front. For the American and British side after General Antonov's presentation, General Marshall spoke. Overcoming the Ardennes barrier had brought the Anglo-American armies to the Germany door. It seemed clear that her fate was sealed.

YALTA CONFERENCE AND THE FIRST DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE FUTURE WINNERS

President Roosevelt's latest goal was a major political mistake. Despite Churchill objections, Roosevelt agreed that Russia would take over all the territory it had lost in the 1904-1905 war against Japan. The Soviet Union also took over the Kurile Islands and the southern half of the Sakhalin island. Upon allowing this, nothing could keep the Soviet Union if there was a war in Asia with Germany defeated. The Russians were very happy with this release after seeking

retribution to Japan for the humble humiliation years ago. In this atmosphere, the first day of the conference has passed. At the dinner that was served in a typical Russian style, none of the three greats had political conversations and they were in a very good mood. On the second day of the conference, the reality unfolded in all its gloom. The Red Army had occupied almost all of eastern Europe. Churchill and Roosevelt realized that they had little chance of applying the Western style of democracy to Poland and its neighbors, but they had to try it anyway. Roosevelt was looking for Soviet Union to join the war in the Pacific immediately after Germany capitulated. Stalin on his side was eager to cut Roosevelt's firm that US troops should not stay in Europe more than two years after the end of the war. If such thing would happen, UK and France (the latter was not invited to Yalta) would be directly exposed to Soviet danger. Churchill was concerned about the destiny of small countries and seeing Stalin's disinterestedness in this matter he stated that: *"The eagle should allow the little birds to sing and not worry about them singing"*. With this phrase, Churchill meant that the countries had to be free to choose the model of government they wanted and not to be imposed from outside. Undoubtedly, Stalin did not even intend to let the "little birds" decide their own destiny. Initially, all three leaders agreed that Germany has to be broken. But Stalin intervened, saying that: *"What kind of broke? Should every part have its own government part?"* Churchill to this question of Stalin has made its own intervention by saying that: *"I think we all agree on splitting, but the current method of removing the lines is too complicated, to be settled for five or six days. Deeper knowledge is required in geography, history and economic issues. If anyone would ask me today, how would you divide Germany, I wouldn't know what answer to give."* Stalin has understood Churchill game. The British prime minister wanted to win time. That would be very damaging to the Soviet leader. For Stalin, the catastrophe that was engulfing Germany has required a quick solution. Should the Germans be informed about this matter? How their place would be broken? Another issue raised at the Yalta conference was whether France would be given an occupation zone in Germany? France was not invited to the conference. Although General de Gaulle had made several visits to London and Washington before the conference, he was not expected by either Churchill or Roosevelt. For the first time in its glorious political history, France was not invited to participate in a conference where the fate of the world was being decided. This would also be the turning point that General de Gaulle would take during the Cold War era.

In Yalta it was agreed to split Germany, but it was not agreed who would pay for the war reparations. It was also not agreed what the form of government would be for post-war Germany.

Maybe the winning powers wanted to stay in German territory forever? Churchill and Roosevelt did not want to endlessly help Moscow. Only during the four years of war they had provided the Soviet Union with \$ 6 billion in food and weapons assistance. Stalin was outraged by this rejection of the Allies. He reminded Western leaders that the Soviet Union had suffered more than anyone else during the war. At this point, Roosevelt was about to give Stalin concessions, but encountered the opposition of Churchill. Most likely, Roosevelt agreed to put \$ 20 billion in aid to the Soviet Union before Congress, but insisted that no figures should be presented in the final conference statement. Yalta conference had problems with reparations. This fact shook the alliance. Stalin felt frustrated at seeing that he could not win, at a time when the military position of the Soviet Union was better than at any time. He realized he couldn't do anything else. He had to get most of the reparations from the Ruhr area, which was also the heart of German industry, but which had actually fallen into the British occupation zone. While the Allies had time to postpone some of the decisions for Germany, they had no time left to make decisions on Poland, which was also the main topic of discussion. There were two issues

on Poland; first, the western borders on which Germany was directly affected; and, second, the future Polish government, which was not Germany, but which was directly concerned by the Soviet Union. The Soviet position on Eastern Europe has shocked Churchill. He understood that this part of Europe would fall under Soviet influence. Although in October 1944 they had agreed with Stalin on what would be the zones of influence in Eastern Europe, he had to surrender to the Soviet leader's will. Now, the little birds would sing according to the appetite of the great eagle. The two leaders fiercely fought for Poland. Stalin has supported the government established in Ljubljana while leaving the Polish government in exile in London. Unfortunately, Churchill could do nothing in this regard, as the Red Army had *de facto* occupied Poland.

When the Yalta Conference closed on February 12, 1945, the three greats had lost and won. Roosevelt had won at the international arena, promising Stalin to vote for the US formula for the United Nations and the entry into the war against Japan. Stalin had reaped great success by placing all of Eastern Europe under Soviet hegemony. Churchill succeeded in keeping Western Europe intact and re-establishing France in the Great Council to balance Soviet power in the event of US troops leaving Europe. For the first time Roosevelt realized (Churchill had long understood) that Stalin would take no step back from the territories he had occupied. The Yalta conference divided Europe and Germany into zones of influence. The world that was "visited" in Yalta, Crimea would take weird poses. Impact zones would take shape little by little. Upon his return from Yalta, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt would express himself: "*It was the best I could do*". Unfortunately, time did not give justice to the American president. Only America benefited from this agreement. Economically, the US came out on top. The investments they would make in Western Europe would be huge and so would profits. Unfortunately, things did not close with Yalta conference. Just like in the past, another high level meeting was needed to place points on the "i". As Germany was sliding toward a frightening end, the three greats were dispatched to their countries to revisit once more the plans they had "drilled" into Yalta.

POTSDAM CONFERENCE

After the Yalta meeting, events at the end of World War II came with great speed. The Allied armies broke through German defenses and began advancing rapidly through Germany. Before committing suicide on April 30, 1945, Hitler appointed Admiral Karl to the post of German Chancellor. Seeing that the situation was hopeless, Admiral Dnic ordered the German forces to capitulate. Germany's official surrender on 7 May 1945 in Reims. With the Soviet insistence, the following day it was also signed in Berlin. The capitulation act referred to the surrender of German military forces and not for the surrender of the government. In the first paragraph of the capitulation act was read: "*We, the undersigned, acting under the authority of the High Command, surrender unconditionally to the Allied Supreme Command Forces and at the same time to the Red Army High Command, with all land, naval and air forces still under German occupation*". Admiral Dnic's government continued to operate outside the German capital Flensburg for another three weeks. After three weeks, it ceased to exist when without much ceremony the allied forces arrested all members of the government. Since it was a one-sided step, officially no German head of government did not sign the official submission. Likewise, no German official gave up the country's authority and sovereignty. Many associate attorneys opposed this one-sided act, as Germany no longer had a government that it would have to represent in central institutions. On June 5, 1945, the victorious allies of World War II took over the sovereignty over Germany. This act has entered in the history of international relations such as the Berlin Declaration.

Although had occupied Germany, again the Allies were finding no rest to put into practice those conditions that had been set in Yalta over the division and reparations that the country had to pay. Stalin continued to insist that the Allies meet once again in the Soviet occupation zone in the historic city of Potsdam near Berlin. This city was not destroyed as much as other German cities during the bombing. The Western allies agreed, and for three weeks from July 17 to August 1, 1945 they once again determined the fate of Germany at the Sans Souci residence of Greater Frederick. At this meeting, Churchill was slipping under his feet. The cooperation that the Allies had during the war, was fading away. With great sadness he saw the Soviet armies being imposed on Eastern and Central Europe. Even more sad was the departure of American forces from Europe to Asia or their homeland. The British Prime Minister tried with soul to do it for himself the new US president, Harry Truman which he had never ignored when he had been Roosevelt's deputy. The British prime minister was returning to a deserted figure in Potsdam. Churchill tried to persuade Truman to delay the withdrawal of American troops from the occupation zones at least until a break with Stalin. Truman refused. In order to continue the humiliation, Councilman and Foreign Minister Iden forced to abandon Potsdam Conference after the Conservative Party lost parliamentary elections in Britain.

CONCLUSIONS

Churchill's successor to the post of prime minister in Great Britain was Clement Attlee. During the war, he had been deputy prime minister and had attended the Potsdam Conference since the beginning of the proceedings. He continued on Churchill's path faithfully pursuing the foreign policy devised by its predecessor, but it had no impact on the conference. Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin, too, has shown character and will, but has been unable to change anything. The most important person at the conference was US President Harry Truman. At first the president did not want to attend Potsdam. He thought they expected more important work in Washington than in Germany. He did not much like to discuss, but to give orders that would be implemented. Truman didn't give the impression that he was a good connoisseur of characters, but Stalin's character was well known. He knew that with the military force at their disposal, the US could not stop the enigmatic Stalin. How far had thought of expanding the Soviet Union? Nobody knew this. In a conversation with US General Badal Smith in March 1945, who was also the first CIA director, the Soviet leader said that: "*Russia knows its enemies*".

Despite the disagreements, the three greats proved capable of shaping Europe's future and taking six major decisions. First, they decided to form the Council of Foreign Ministers, which would meet regularly to prepare peace treaties for Germany and its allies. Initially, peace treaties would be drawn up for Italy, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, and Romania, followed by a separate treaty for Germany. Secondly, the three greats agreed to treat Germany as a single economic entity with an equal distribution of its economic benefits. Thirdly, all three greats have abandoned the Morgento plan wishing that Germany would not lose its economic assets. Facing the fact, the secretary of the treasury (Morgento) was forced to sign. Fourth, the three greats agreed that there would be no eternal partition of Germany. Fifth, the three greats agreed to deport the remaining Germans to Germany from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. By doing so, they "cleared" the aforementioned sites from the ethnic Germans. Sixth, the three greats agreed that no future German government would oppose the treaty peace. In Potsdam the war against Germany turned into a war for Germany. Although the three greats did not speak for the fragmentation of the land, with their actions they have made exactly what they intended not to do. Without a common policy, each occupying power did what it wanted in its occupation zone. Potsdam was the last gathering of the three greats who designed a united

Germany but ended it apart. Potsdam did not bring about the resolution of the German case just left it in suspense and as a constant threat of confrontation.

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