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**The Polish Question at Yalta, 1945:
Public Opinion on the Polish Agreements**

by
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HIS 490 History Honors Thesis

**Department of History
Providence College
Fall 2019**

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Thank you,
Christopher Maxim

INTRODUCTION

The diplomatic history of World War II has been widely covered by historians. Historians have largely agreed that the relationship among Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin began to deteriorate as the war was coming to an end, but largely disagree as to why this is so. Many historians acknowledge the fact that negotiations on Poland were a serious issue at the Yalta Conference and contributed to the downfall of the alliance but fall short of labeling it as the main factor. Historians such as Jon Meacham and Vladislav Zubok tend to tell a broader timeline of the alliance and examine the uncertainty of Poland as a part of that story, but do not largely focus on the details. Others including Charles G. Stefan and David Reynolds discuss at length the details of Yalta Conference. Others largely view Yalta and Poland as being an important contributor to the downfall of the alliance. Ultimately, historians largely do not discuss the public's opinion on the Yalta agreements, and I believe that this is an area of importance which needs exploration, especially regarding Poland. It is my view that Poland was the central issue at the Yalta Conference which resulted in a compromise that favored Stalin. This was revealed in the actions taken by the Russians following the meeting. The West's alliance with Russia deteriorated as a direct result of Polish agreements and it is important to understand public sentiment revealed in newspapers and polling following the conference.

Historians who see Poland's Importance

Jon Meacham's *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship*, largely focused on the progression of the relationship between the Big Three which was supported by the evolution of events during World War II. The work is divided into three parts, in which the third "Part III: The Chill of Autumn: *Fall 1943 to the End*," depicted the relationship between the Big Three from the Teheran Conference to President Roosevelt's death. Although the book largely focused on the relationship between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, Meacham discussed how their relationship changed between the two as President Roosevelt increased focus on Secretary General Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union. Meacham utilized a variety of sources including direct communications between leaders, family members' accounts of events between leaders such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Clementine Churchill and accounts from officials and diplomats, for example, Harry Hopkins, Charles Bohlen and Frederick Lindemann. These sources were utilized to give outside perspectives of the relationship between Roosevelt and Churchill. Meacham identified Poland as being one of the large issues, in addition to the establishment of the United Nations, which arose at the Yalta Conference and was subject to hours and hours of debate. At the time, Poland was controlled by the Red Army and greatly affected discourse. There were disputes over borders and the postwar Polish government, but ultimately Stalin made vague promises about free elections in the Declaration of Liberated Europe. Meacham argued that Roosevelt and Churchill gave their best effort to build an orderly relationship with the Russians with the hope of achieving orderly settlements. Meacham utilized the Polish discussions to reveal the evolving relationship of the alliance. However, Meacham

largely avoided extensive discussion on the Polish question but acknowledged that Poland was a main cause of friction between the West and the Russians.¹

Vladislav Zubok utilized an in-depth analysis and perspective of Stalin and the Soviet Union to explain how and why the alliance between the Big Three fell apart. Zubok opposed several stances such as that the alliance fell through due to the delay in the opening of the Second Front while supporting that the root cause of the decay was due to the uncertainty of Central and Eastern Europe. Also, the contrast of Roosevelt's optimism, friendliness and transparency paired with Stalin's power-driven, realist and cynical perspectives were utilized throughout the work. Zubok also cited perspectives of the Soviet population, diplomats, and officials to contribute to his arguments. However, the work only mentioned that the Yalta Conference was a great victory for Stalin's statesmanship in which waves of optimism were felt throughout Soviet bureaucracies. The government was particularly excited about the agreements reached on Polish and Yugoslav issues. However, he did not describe the details of the conference. Zubok also noted that President Roosevelt was irate over the news of the Soviet occupation methods in Eastern Europe, but it was Truman who accused the Soviets of breaking Yalta agreements on Poland.²

John Lewis Gaddis examined the alliance between the Big Three using a broad timeline from when the leaders first began cooperating until the alliance fell apart. Gaddis argued that the alliance was flawed from the beginning due to Roosevelt's framework of principle and

¹ Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship*, (Random House Trade Paperback, 2004).

² Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

pragmatism that Roosevelt hoped to cooperate with Stalin. Furthermore, it was Stalin's paranoia of his allies, in particular Churchill, which contributed to the flawed relationship. Gaddis' interpretation of the alliance between the Big Three was that it was Stalin who was to blame for the breakdown of the alliance due to his suspicion, distrust and cynicism. Gaddis did not discuss the details of the Yalta Conference and largely focused on Stalin's views and actions on Poland and Eastern Europe. Gaddis outlined Stalin's previous actions in Poland during his Nazi-Soviet Pact where he authorized the murder of thousands of Polish officers. Therefore, Stalin had to repair those damages later during the war and recognized the Lublin Poles, a puppet regime, instead of recognizing the London Poles in exile who were calling for an investigation of Stalin's atrocities. Although Stalin obtained the Polish government that he wanted, it came a large cost which laid the foundations for resistance that would grow in time. It was Stalin himself who had persuaded the West that the Russians could be trusted.³

David Reynolds largely talked of the alliance in terms of military history in, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940's*. Reynolds examined the changing relationship within the alliance as the war progressed, especially from the buildup to Operation Overlord to the race to Berlin. Furthermore, Reynolds argued that officials in London and Washington were too hopeful that Stalin could be trusted and co-opted into a post-war concert based on an open sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The wartime alliance was grounded on faith in Stalin. Ultimately, the alliance changed dramatically as large achievements were being made on the eastern front while the second front was moving faster than Churchill envisioned, shifting the balance of the alliance to the Soviet Union and the United

³ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

States. This time period is analyzed from a realist point of view in which the balance of power and spheres of influence were becoming a pressing matter for the future of Europe. Reynolds studied how the relationship deteriorated as a result of Stalin's military achievements made from 1943 through 1945. Reynolds did not focus on the details of the Yalta Conference and instead, focused more on the deterioration of the agreements reached on Poland and of the alliance as a whole.⁴

Historians who see Yalta's Importance

Charles G. Stefan outlined and analyzed the events of the Yalta Conference in his work "Yalta Revisited: An Update in the Diplomacy of FDR and His Wartime Summit Partners." Stefan articulated that the Yalta Conference was the climax of the alliance and quickly crumbled after due to an escalation in Soviet actions. Only after the fall of the Soviet Union was Roosevelt's and Churchill's for Eastern Europe were achieved. The paper covered topics which were discussed by the Big Three including: the partition and occupation zones of Germany and Poland, the establishment of the United Nations, Soviet participation in the war against Japan, and the Declaration of Liberated Europe. Stefan noted that some negotiations went much smoother and easier than others, which sparked intense debate and compromises. Each leader came to the meeting with a different set of priorities. Stefan also specifically examined the evolution of the Big Three's attitudes between the end of the conference and the death of

⁴ David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940's* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

President Roosevelt. In doing so, Stefan largely focused on Poland utilizing various accounts from the Big Three and officials who attended the conference. The importance of Poland was stressed in the acknowledgement that it was discussed in seven out of the eight plenary meetings and despite the efforts by Churchill and Roosevelt, neither were able to achieve the kind of agreement on Poland initially sought.⁵

In another work by David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, Reynolds analyzed the Yalta Conference of 1945. Reynolds took two approaches to analyze why the Yalta agreement played a significant role in the breakdown of the alliance. First, Reynolds outlined that the leaders came to the meeting with different priorities and goals. President Roosevelt's and the Americans prioritized solving the differences over the construction of the United Nations Organization and Stalin's commitment to an early entry into the war against Japan. Winston Churchill and the British deemed the future of Europe and the avoidance of punitive reparations against Germany to be of utmost importance. Although Stalin's priorities at Yalta are harder to examine due to less documentation, it is clear from his behavior at Yalta that he raised the possibility of dismembering Germany, presented precise demands for substantial reparations from the defeated enemy, and also stressed the importance over the "Polish question." Second, the diplomatic maneuvers enacted by the leaders helped deteriorate the alliance. Reynolds concluded that it was these rifts which contributed to the breakdown of the alliance. Yalta was not the moment when the Big Three divided Europe nor was it the sellout of Eastern Europe to the Soviets; influence was in the hands of the Soviets as a result of military

⁵ Charles G. Stefan, "Yalta Revisited: An Update in the Diplomacy of FDR and His Wartime Summit Partners," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 23, No. 4, The Managerial, Political and Spiritual Presidencies (Fall, 1993), pp. 755-770.

achievement and agreements reached at Tehran in 1943. Roosevelt and Churchill sought to contain the Soviet influence at Yalta. Reynolds did discuss Poland at length and acknowledged that the dynamics of the conference were very different on the issue of Poland because Churchill and Roosevelt knew that Stalin had the upper hand. Understanding the situation, the West pleaded for some concessions by Stalin to assist them with public opinion. Reynolds discussed the agreements on the Polish border and formation of the government to argue that the Americans were more interested in moral sentiments than hard details and that the applicability of the Declaration of Liberated Europe to Poland was vague generalities.⁶

Historians who see the Importance of Poland and Yalta

Vladimir Pechatnov's paper, "The Big Three after World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post-War Relations with the United States and Great Britain," reflected several views of Soviet officials from 1944-1945. The documents of Litinov, Maisky and Gromkyo are used to present viewpoints of preliminary intentions before the events of V-Day, Hiroshima, and other large events which continuously changed the perceptions and behavior among the Big Three. Pechatnov studied this time period by analyzing the realist approach from the Kremlin in terms of spheres of influence and balance of power. Pechatnov argued that Russia's main priority was security, and having an independent and vigorous Poland, but one that was not too large or

⁶ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (Perseus Basic Books, 2007).

strong, was essential to the security of Russia; a Poland who would become a friend in the future.⁷

Lehram discussed the relationship between the Big Three by examining the individual communications between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. The work also utilized written and verbal accounts from officials and family members. Some accounts include opinions from Eleanor Roosevelt and Clementine Churchill on their views of each other's husbands. Furthermore, Lehram discussed rifts between the alliance due to repayment from the Lend-Lease debts, British colonial intentions, Roosevelt's attempts to distance himself from a special Anglo-American relationship, and policy differences at the Teheran and Yalta Conferences. There was no one definitive rift which caused the deterioration of the alliance and the subject is left as a broad decline of the alliance. Lehram argued that it was Roosevelt who caused the growing separation between himself and Churchill. He also largely focused on the relationship between Roosevelt and Churchill and would discuss Stalin in terms of how he impacted their relationship. Instead of focusing on fine details of the Yalta Conference, Lehram directed his attention more to the deterioration of the alliance. That being said, Lehram did acknowledge that Roosevelt had previously failed to take up serious issues regarding Poland's future, despite the fact that the American Polish constituency was loyal to the Democratic Party. Furthermore, the United States and Britain had little leverage in Eastern European matters and the final draft of the Allied declaration on Poland reflected that fact; it was an act of surrender to the Soviets.⁸

⁷ Vladimir O. Pechatnov, "The Big Three after World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post-War Relations with the United States and Great Britain," Working Paper, May 1995, No. 13, 1-26.

⁸ Lewis E. Lehram, *Churchill, Roosevelt and Company: Studies in Character and Statecraft*, (Stackpole Books, 2017).

Melvyn P. Leffler's article, "Adherence to Agreements: Yalta and the Experiences of the Early Cold War" examined several topics including: the establishment of a Polish border and government, the Manhattan Project, the Percentages Agreement, and the Declaration of Liberated Europe. Leffler argued that it was the search for spheres of influence that caused the alliance to fall apart. Leffler discussed the final agreements reached on Poland at Yalta but did not discuss the details from the conference. Instead, Leffler plainly stated the fact that this was a compromise and that there was littler that the West could do after the conference. The conclusion was that the relationship broke down as a result of miscommunication and misinterpretation of the Yalta Conference. Ultimately, the situation worsened due the West's overselling of the agreements reached at Yalta and all sides were equally responsible for the destruction of the alliance.⁹

Conclusion

Historians have generally concurred that the alliance between the Big Three ended with the Yalta Conference but largely differ on why it did. Mostly, historians use the "Polish question" as part of the story as to why the alliance fell apart towards the end of the war but avoid labeling it as the main issue. I argue that Poland was the central factor to the deterioration of the alliance and needs to be examined more closely. I strongly agree with Diana Preston's recent work, *Eight Days at Yalta: How Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin Shaped the Post-War World* which closely examined the proceedings of the Yalta Conference, and in doing so, revealed the importance of

⁹ Melvyn P. Leffler, "Adherence to Agreements: Yalta and the Experiences of the Early Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 11 (Summer, 1986), pp. 88-123, The MIT Press.

Poland.¹⁰ Therefore, a close examination of the debates on Poland at the conference is essential to understand the “Polish question” and its effect on the Big Three’s alliance after the conference. I believe that Poland was the central issue at Yalta due to the large amount of debate during the conference, which will be revealed in the Bohlen Minutes in Chapter 1. Furthermore, the telegrams sent between the Big Three reveal that it was Stalin’s actions in Poland after Yalta that crippled the alliance and paved a path to the Cold War. Following the Conference, the democratic bases of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were quick to point out the failures in their leader’s dealings regarding Poland at the Yalta Conference despite attempts to oversell the Conference as a major success. Seeing as though this was the central issue at Yalta, it is equally important to understand the views of the public regarding the decisions reached on Poland. Preston also frequently discussed the importance of public opinion throughout her work which I believe is an essential aspect of the Yalta Conference.¹¹ The agreements on Poland at Yalta quickly unraveled and it is just as important to understand the domestic opinion on this as it is to understand President Roosevelt’s and Prime Minister Churchill’s opinions. Other areas which need further examination include how the Yalta Conference was portrayed by President Roosevelt to Congress and the views of Republicans and Democrats.

¹⁰ Dianna Preston, *Eight Days at Yalta: How Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin Shaped the Post-War World*, (Picador, 2019).

¹¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNICATIONS, OFFICIAL ACCOUNTS, AND AGREEMENTS:

POLISH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Before the Conference:

From August 9th through the 10th in 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met aboard the U.S.S. Augusta to discuss their war aims and outline a postwar international system. The Atlantic Charter which was drafted included eight principles that the two states would be committed to in the postwar world. The eight principles included: both countries would not seek territorial expansion, establish freedom of the seas, international labor, economic and welfare standards, and liberalize international trade. Most importantly, the United States and Britain would support the restoration of self-government for all countries occupied during the war and allow all peoples to choose their own form of government.¹² The Atlantic Charter is vital to understand in order to properly analyze the Yalta Conference and to better understand critics' reactions to the agreements reached in 1945.

Immediately before the conference, Churchill wanted a preconference session with Roosevelt. Churchill determined that a meeting alone with Roosevelt before beginning talks with

¹² "The Atlantic Charter and Conference, 1941." August 14, 1941. *Office of the Historian*. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/atlantic-conf> (Accessed October 2, 2019).

Stalin was essential to the success of the Yalta Conference. Roosevelt agreed to a conference with Churchill in Malta aboard the *Quincy* before convening with Stalin at Yalta. The meeting was a letdown to Churchill due to Roosevelt's avoidance of serious discussions because he preferred to wait for the sessions with Stalin.¹³ David Reynolds noted in *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, that Roosevelt did not want to give Stalin the impression of an Anglo-American front.¹⁴ Another factor was that Roosevelt "Vainly believed that he could charm and flatter Stalin."¹⁵ Ultimately, Roosevelt determined that it was best to avoid bilateral discussions. In regard to military advancements being made during the time, the Soviets were in control of most of Eastern Europe by the time the Big Three met in Yalta. The West could not evict the Red Army except by force which they were not willing or able to do.¹⁶ Therefore, the West was negotiating out of a weak starting point and falsely believed that they could build a cooperative relationship with Stalin. The statement by Stalin in April 1945 exemplifies his plan for Yalta; that "Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army has to power to do so."¹⁷ Due to fact that the Red Army's success had led to a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, it would prove to be increasingly difficult to maintain the vision of the Atlantic Charter at Yalta,

¹³ Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship*, (Random House Trade Paperback, 2004).

¹⁴ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (Perseus Basic Books, 2007).

¹⁵ Lewis E. Lehram, *Churchill, Roosevelt and Company: Studies in Character and Statecraft*, (Stackpole Books, 2017).

¹⁶ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (Perseus Basic Books, 2007).

¹⁷ Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, transl. Michael B. Petrovich (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1962), p. 105 (accessed January 3, 2020.)

specifically the restoration of self-government for all countries occupied during the war and to allow all peoples to choose their own form of government.

During the Conference:

From February 4th through the 11th, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Stalin met in Crimea to begin to solidify decisions regarding the future progress of the war and the postwar world.¹⁸ Each respective leader and their teams of diplomats came to Yalta with specific goals. At Yalta, the Allied Powers met to discuss the unconditional surrender of Germany, Russian entry into the Japanese front, the creation of the United Nations, the future of Eastern Europe, and more. Although major agreements were accomplished through the diplomatic efforts, they were not accomplished without debate and compromises. There was tension regarding all topics and the topic of Poland became the clear focus of the Yalta Conference. Questions over Poland's border and the establishment of a provisional government sparked debate and compromises which resulted in the recognition of the Curzon Line and a provisional government which would feature free elections. Poland was the central issue at the conference and cause of the rift within the alliance.

For each day a Plenary Meeting was scheduled which would include the Big Three and selected diplomats. Charles Bohlen, who was one of the selected diplomats, recorded the discussions which took place during the Plenary Meetings. Bohlen was a lifelong diplomat and Soviet expert who served with George Kennan from 1933 – 1944 in the Soviet Union. The two

¹⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Yalta and Malta, 1945. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/yalta-conf> (Accessed January 7, 2020).

were both graduates from Eastern European Division of the State Department. Eventually, Bohlen was sent back to D.C. in 1935 after the breakup of the Eastern European Division but returned from 1938 – 1941. Bohlen was open to cooperation with the Russians and acknowledged the ruthless dictatorship of the Soviet system. Due to his direct contact with Roosevelt and Stalin, Bohlen developed a personal loyalty to Roosevelt and especially to Harry Hopkins.¹⁹ There were eight Plenary Meetings, one for each day of the Conference. Bohlen Poland was discussed in all meetings with a particular focus during meetings three through seven and increased in debate as days proceeded. The seventh day consisted of drafting a final agreement which largely focused on the language.²⁰ Bohlen's minutes have often been neglected by historians and are rarely used. Historians Jon Meacham utilized Bohlen throughout their works but did not use the Yalta minutes often.²¹ Lewis E. Lehram also utilized the perspective of Charles E. Bohlen but neglected his minutes of the conference.²² Seeing as though Bohlen attended and took notes at every Plenary Meeting, his minutes are essential to understanding how the Polish question was handled at Yalta and therefore, will be heavily utilized in this section.

Bohlen's minutes offer a unique perspective into the inner functions of the alliance and revealed the diplomatic maneuvers, progression, disagreements, and compromises. After reading Bohlen's minutes, it became clear that the absence of Polish representation at Yalta was an issue

¹⁹ Harper, John L. "Friends, Not Allies: George F. Kennan and Charles E. Bohlen." *World Policy Journal* 12, no. 2 (1995): 77-88. Accessed February 23, 2020.

²⁰ Office of the Historian: Milestones: 1937-1945. The Yalta Conference, 1945. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/yalta-conf> (Accessed January 7, 2020).

²¹ Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship*, (Random House Trade Paperback, 2004): 316-317, 319.

²² Lewis E. Lehram, *Churchill, Roosevelt and Company: Studies in Character and Statecraft*, (Stackpole Books, 2017): 271.

which was brought up on numerous occasions, especially by President Roosevelt. I believe that the leaders knew there would be a tension and criticism between what was reached at Yalta and what was stated in the Atlantic Charter, and therefore opted to exclude Polish representation from the meeting. Even before the conference, Churchill believed that all the Balkans, except Greece, were going to be Bolshevized and that there was “nothing I can do for poor Poland either.”²³ There was a last-minute effort during the conference to have Polish representation at the meeting by President Roosevelt, but ultimately there was not enough time for them to arrive.²⁴ After the conference, Roosevelt acknowledged that the agreement was the best that he could do for Poland.²⁵ The Polish thus had no say in their future. Unlike Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill had to worry about dissenting opinions in the government and public and this is perhaps why they attempted to oversell the agreement.

Poland was discussed at length during the 4th plenary meeting on February 7th at Yalta. Molotov gave proposals in regard to the Polish question which included the Polish border and the establishment of the Provisional Polish Government. The President approved of the progress made in light of Molotov’s suggestions and offered few amendments. Molotov also addressed Roosevelt’s suggestion that Poles come to Crimea and that the Russians attempted to contact

²³ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (Perseus Basic Books, 2007): 134.

²⁴ Demetris Loizos, The Polish Question at the Yalta Conference, 1945. October 29, 2016 (accessed January 3, 2020).

²⁵ Lewis E. Lehram, *Churchill, Roosevelt and Company: Studies in Character and Statecraft*, (Stackpole Books, 2017): 270.

them but were unable to reach them.²⁶ In actuality, Stalin blocked repeated Western requests to bring Polish communist leaders from Warsaw to Yalta and claimed that it was impossible to reach them by phone. Stalin's carefully timed concession on the United Nations talks was intended to extract something in return over Poland.²⁷ Poland was one of the top priorities for Stalin heading into the conference. Stalin believed that a quiescent client state in Poland, which had historically has been the gateway for German aggression, was key to the security of Russia. Generally, Stalin wished to regain territories lost from World War I including eastern Poland and Baltic territory and to expand around the Black Sea.²⁸ The concept of territorial security was essential to Stalin's regime and therefore was a driving point of his at the conference.

Prime Minister Churchill would often write to officials in London, especially the War Cabinet, to keep them up to date on the proceedings of the conference. Prime Minister Churchill cabled the Deputy Prime Minister and the War Cabinet to relay the progress being made at the Yalta Conference on February 8, 1945. Here, he tried to shed a positive light on the agreements being reached on Poland. Churchill began his message by stating that they had a "much better day" at the Conference because parties were beginning to accept proposals. Churchill was especially excited to announce the progress on Poland. He described how President Roosevelt drafted a letter, which the British amended, that proposed that "the existing Lublin Government

²⁶ Office of the Historian: Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Yalta and Malta, 1945. Document 373. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Malta/d373> (accessed October 2, 2019).

²⁷ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, (Perseus Basic Books, 2007): 136.

²⁸ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, (Perseus Basic Books, 2007): 115-116.

should give place to a new all Polish Government containing representatives both from the Poles abroad and those within Poland.” Churchill argued that the plan was to fight hard for a Polish Government that the West could recognize. The goal would be to put forward a number of Poles who would be placed into the Lublin Government so that foundations would be laid for “the free, fair and unfettered” elections which would give the Polish state “life and being.”²⁹ It should be noted that there were two groups of Poles being discussed at the conference. One was the exiled Polish government in London and the other was the “Lublin Poles” which was a provisional government in Warsaw that was established by the Soviets.³⁰ He was proud that the Big Three were coming to conclusions over the Polish question but acknowledged that it had not been, nor would it be, an easy fight to win. Churchill was overselling the agreement to officials in London.

Bohlen recorded minutes of the sixth plenary meeting on February 9, 1945 at Yalta in which the Big Three and respected diplomats discussed various topics including Poland. Prime Minister Churchill agreed that progress had been made but wished to emphasize two points. One, which applied directly to the formation of a new Polish government, stated that the new situation that had been created due to the complete liberation of Poland by the Red Army called for a government more “broadly based.” Furthermore, it was stated by Churchill that “this might be an ornament but nevertheless an important ornament.” Churchill also questioned the flow of accurate information coming from Poland. Later, discussion began regarding who was to be permitted to participate in the new Polish Government. Marshal Stalin concluded that “this was a

²⁹ Prime Minister Churchill to Deputy Prime Minister and the War Cabinet. February 8, 1945. The Churchill Archive. CHAR 20/223/10-11. (Accessed May 23, 2019).

³⁰ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, (Perseus Basic Books, 2007): 136.

matter which should be discussed in the presence of the Poles,” being the Lublin Poles, but Churchill stated that “he thought this was a matter which was necessary to carry through and that it was important to assure the House of Commons that free elections would be held in Poland.” The topic was left at the time.³¹ Discussion of Poland took up the majority of the sixth plenary meeting and displayed the potential motives of Prime Minister Churchill. From this meeting, it appeared as though the Prime Minister was primarily concerned with creating a good agreement which would be approved by officials in London. If Churchill truly believed that the term “broadly based” was ornamental in purposes for approval from London, then it is not surprising that Stalin acted the way he did in Poland. Stalin fully understood his military presence in Poland and the overall broadness of the agreement and therefore, knew he would implement them in the way he wanted.

Poland was once again one of the primary topics at the 7th plenary meeting on February 10, 1945. The discussion between the Big Three and diplomats largely centered around the establishment of a Polish border. At this point, all leaders had agreed upon the Eastern frontier of Poland and Churchill now stated that there should be compensation in the West, “up to the Oder if the Poles so desired.” Churchill also stated that he did not believe that the War Cabinet would accept the line of Western Neisse. Most notably, Churchill stated that “some mention should be made of the territorial settlement otherwise the whole world would wonder what had been decided on this question. There would be some criticism, but nevertheless, it would be better than no mention at all.” To this, President Roosevelt replied, “that the Polish Government should

³¹ Office of the Historian: Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Yalta and Malta, 1945. Document 423. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Malta/d423> (accessed May 24, 2019).

be consulted before any statement was made in regard to the Western frontier.”³² The Polish border caused tension and disagreement between the allies. Even the question of whether or not the Big Three should have considered making a statement on the Western frontier was up to debate. The President was correct in his argument that the Polish government should have been consulted on these topics and or should have been represented at Yalta.

On February 10, Prime Minister Churchill cabled the Deputy Prime Minister and the War Cabinet to relay the accomplishments of the day. The telegram largely discussed the establishment of votes in the United Nations, Poland, and the inclusion of France as a major power in the post-war world. Churchill wrote in regard to Poland that “after a prolonged struggle, the Foreign Secretary agreed with Americans and Russians on a very good draft about Poland last night.” Then, the only remaining point left was for an “agreement for supervising voting and also for our informing ourselves properly about what is going on in Poland.”³³ The Polish draft was certainly an accomplishment for the Big Three, however, hesitation and suspicion was acknowledged in this message. Churchill admitted that they still needed to find out what was happening on the ground in Poland, considering the fact that it was completely occupied by the Red Army.

On February 13, 1945, the Declaration of Liberated Europe was published. The agreement between the Big Three outlined many things including: organization of the United Nations and its voting procedures, agreements regarding Japan, German reparations and war

³² Office of the Historian Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Yalta and Malta, 1945. Document 451. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Malta/d451> (Accessed May 24, 2019).

³³ Prime Minister Churchill to Deputy Prime Minister and the War Cabinet. February 10, 1945. The Churchill Archive. CHAR 20/223/19-21. (Accessed May 23, 2019).

criminals, German dismemberment, and discussed the future of Eastern Europe. The agreement largely discussed Poland and in much more detail than the other countries of Eastern Europe. It was stated that:

A new situation has been created in Poland as a result of her complete liberation by the Red Army. This calls for the establishment of a Polish Provisional Government which can be more broadly based than was possible before the recent liberation of the western part of Poland. The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad.

Polish leaders within Poland and from abroad would be included in this government and would be pledged to hold “free and unfettered elections... on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot.” The United States, United Kingdom, and U.S.S.R were to establish formal diplomatic relations with the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity and would exchange ambassadors. The agreement also established new Polish borders:

The three heads of Government consider that the eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon Line with digressions from it in some regions of five to eight kilometers in favor of Poland. They recognize that Poland must receive substantial accessions in territory in the north and west. They feel that the opinion of the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity should be sought in due course of the extent of these accessions and that the final delimitation of the western frontier of Poland should thereafter await the peace conference.³⁴

³⁴ “Yalta Conference Agreement, Declaration of a Liberated Europe.” February 11, 1945. *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives*. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116176> (accessed October 2, 2019).

After the Conference:

Churchill wrote to President Roosevelt on February 28, 1945 to detail the current debate within Britain concerning the decisions reached on Poland at Yalta. The Prime Minister stated that there was “a good deal of uneasiness in both parties” that the West was “letting the Poles down.”³⁵ Mainly, the conservatives voiced their discontent with the agreements through what Churchill described as a “hostile” amendment in favor of Poland.³⁶ As debate was occurring within the British Parliament, President Roosevelt was preparing to sell the Yalta agreements to Congress.

On March 1, 1945 President Roosevelt delivered a speech on the decisions reached at the Yalta Conference to Congress. Here, the President outlined many accomplishments, including decisions reached on Poland, during his time abroad. Roosevelt began his discussion by stating that “One outstanding example of joint action by the three major Allies in the liberated areas was the solution reached on Poland” and acknowledged that the Polish question was a “potential source of trouble in post-war Europe” but they were still able to find common ground for a solution.³⁷ More specifically, Roosevelt outlined the agreements reached on formulating a new Polish Provisional Government and new boundaries. The new government was to be more representative and to be formed on a “broader democratic basis” which would include Poles from

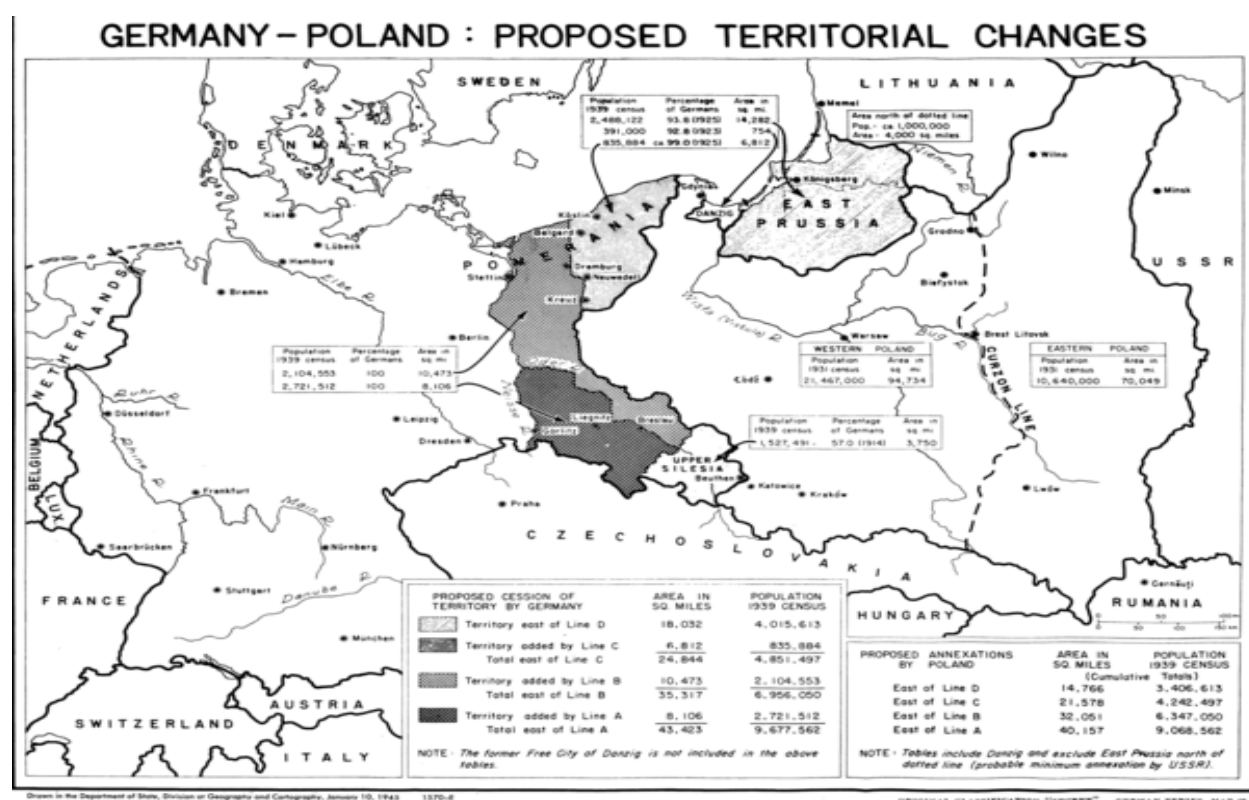
³⁵ Churchill to Roosevelt. February 28, 1945. FDR Library and Archive. (Accessed December 27, 2019).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Message to Congress re the Yalta Conference, p.23. FDR Library and Archive. March 1, 1945. http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msfb0209 (accessed December 27, 2019).

abroad and those in Poland at the present time.³⁸ Furthermore, Roosevelt declared to Congress that the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity would be pledged to hold free elections as soon as possible.³⁹

Moreover, President Roosevelt announced that a strong and independent Poland was necessary to ensure European security and world peace. The decision respecting the boundaries was a “compromise” and the Poles would receive territory in the North and West in exchange for what they lost due to the Curzon Line, as exemplified in the map below.⁴⁰



³⁸ Message to Congress re the Yalta Conference, p.23. FDR Library and Archive. March 1, 1945. (accessed December 27, 2019).

³⁹ Ibid. p. 24.

⁴⁰ Office of the Historian: Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945, Vol. 1.
<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv01/d511> (accessed January 28, 2020).

The Western Boundary was to be primarily fixed during the Peace Conference.⁴¹ President Roosevelt concluded his discussion on Poland by stating that he was “convinced that the agreement on Poland... is the most hopeful agreement possible for a free, independent and prosperous Polish state.”⁴² However, in a prior draft Roosevelt had written that he must “confess” that he was “not completely happy” with respect to the political boundaries of Poland. Ultimately, this statement was retracted and stated as a compromise.⁴³ The edit revealed between the two drafts is an indication of President Roosevelt’s doubt over the agreements reached on Poland. Yet, the President had to maintain that the Polish deal was a good deal and in the spirit of compromise to gain congressional support. The tension between the official and public line on the agreements reached on Yalta is stark considering that Roosevelt was not satisfied with the Polish deal but declared to Congress that it was a deal of compromise and hope. The examination of the edited drafts of Roosevelt’s of his message to congress has not been examined closely before and is important to highlight to reveal Roosevelt’s doubts over the Polish agreement.

As March continued, Churchill could sense that there was a deterioration within the Big Three alliance. The end of the war and peace with Germany and Japan on the West’s terms would not bring “bring much rest” to him and President Roosevelt because there would still be much more work to be done to secure international peace. Churchill wrote to Roosevelt that “When the war of the giants is over, the wars of the pygmies will begin. There will be a torn,

⁴¹ Message to Congress re the Yalta Conference, p.24. FDR Library and Archive. March 1, 1945. (accessed December 27, 2019).

⁴² Message to Congress re the Yalta Conference, p.25. FDR Library and Archive. March 1, 1945. (accessed December 27, 2019).

⁴³ Ibid. p. 84.

ragged and hungry world to help to its feet: and what will Uncle Joe or his successor say to the what we should both like to do it?"⁴⁴ March was a pivotal point in the Big Three alliance.

Churchill and Roosevelt quickly realized that the Yalta agreement was interpreted differently by Stalin as demonstrated through his actions. The Prime Minister was worried in the present and feared what would happen when the war came to a close.

On March 27, Prime Minister Churchill cabled President Roosevelt in distress. The opening sentence revealed that Churchill was "extremely concerned at the deterioration of the Russian attitude since Yalta." The root cause of his distress was largely regarding matters in Poland and Eastern Europe. Churchill vented to Roosevelt over Stalin's interpretations of the Yalta agreements and what he had been doing in Poland since the February agreement. Stalin argued that only a few other Poles would be added to the new Polish government and that the Russian puppets would be consulted first, maintained the right to veto any proposed leaders from the West, and ignored his offer to permit outside observers. Later, Churchill went on to address the broader implications if the West failed to secure a satisfactory solution on Poland. Churchill had advised the critics in the House of Commons to "trust Stalin." If this were to happen, the world would see that they were wrong. All of Eastern Europe would be shown to be excluded from the terms of the declaration of Liberated Europe and the West would be excluded from any influence in that area.⁴⁵ Churchill acknowledged that the Polish question was deteriorating the alliance and Stalin's actions contradicted the West's interpretation of the Yalta agreement. This telegram also

⁴⁴ Churchill to Roosevelt. March 17, 1945. FDR Library and Achieve. (Accessed May 23, 2019)

⁴⁵ Churchill to Roosevelt. March 27, 1945. The Churchill Archive. CHAR 20/213A/53-55 (Accessed May 23, 2019).

revealed that Churchill acknowledged overselling the decisions on Poland at Yalta to the House of Commons which had much broader implications. Churchill stated that there was “only one possible alternative to confessing our total failure. The alternative is to stand by our interpretation of the Yalta declaration.”⁴⁶

President Roosevelt expressed his concerns with Russia and Poland on March 29, 1945. The President explained that he had “likewise been watching with anxiety and concern the development of Soviet attitude since the Crimea Conference.” Here, Roosevelt narrowed in on the text of the Crimean Conference which was left to interpretation. The Yalta agreement was a “compromise” between the Soviet position that the Lublin Government should be merely enlarged and the West’s contention that the government should have started with a clean slate and “assist in the formation of an entirely new Polish Government.” Roosevelt concluded his message by stating that he agreed with Churchill that “the time has come to take up directly with Stalin the broader aspects of the Soviet attitude with particular reference to Poland.”⁴⁷ By the end of March, Roosevelt and Churchill were faced with the reality that the Polish agreements reached at Yalta were rapidly failing and would have to confront Stalin over the issue. The new Polish Government was not being constructed in accordance to Stalin’s agreement.

The correspondence revealed that not long after the conclusion of the Yalta Conference, Churchill and Roosevelt realized that Stalin was, according to them, violating the terms of the Yalta agreements in Poland. Telegrams sent between these two leaders are used by David Reynolds and Jon Meacham to depict the aftermath of Yalta Conference, but a large portion of

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Roosevelt to Churchill. March 29, 1945. FDR Library and Archive. (Accessed on May 24, 2019).

authors avoid telegrams all together. It is especially important that these telegrams be examined to better understand the consequences of the Yalta Conference. The actions of Stalin in Poland revealed that Churchill and Roosevelt greatly oversold the agreements reached at Yalta. The contrast between what was said and agreed upon at Yalta was strikingly different than the public line sold to the British and American officials and public.

CHAPTER 2

AMERICAN AND BRITISH PRESS REACTIONS: SWIFT RESPONSE TO THE YALTA CONFERENCE

Historians have largely neglected public opinion of the Yalta Conference and therefore, public sentiment over the agreements reached on Poland have often been excluded from the discussion of Yalta and its consequences. For example, David Reynolds briefly acknowledged that Republicans in America cited Yalta as an example of appeasement but does not dive into details.⁴⁸ Athan Theoharis examined how the Republican Party attempted to appeal to traditionally Democratic ethnic constituencies. Republican strategists would deny the inevitability of Poland's fate by attributing to post-war developments as a result of Democratic appeasement, selling out, and betrayal at Yalta.⁴⁹ McGeorge Bundy articulated that the Yalta agreements were short lived and described Harry Hopkins' mission to Moscow where he attempted to patch up the Polish issue. Here, Hopkins warned Stalin that "the future of the Roosevelt policy of cooperation depended on favorable public opinion, and that the Polish question, with others, was creating grave doubts."⁵⁰ But how was Yalta covered in the American

⁴⁸ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (Perseus Basic Books, 2007).

⁴⁹ Athan Theoharis, "The Republican Party and Yalta: Partisan Exploitation of the American Concern Over the Conference, 1945-1960," *Polish American Studies* 28, no. 1 (1971), pp. 5-19. Accessed February 3, 2020.

⁵⁰ McGeorge Bundy, "The Test of Yalta," *Foreign Affairs* 27, no: 4, 1949. Accessed February 3, 2020.

press and how did this shape public perception? Largely speaking, public opinion has not been included much in the history of Yalta and therefore, I seek to incorporate this into the larger story of the conference and its aftermath. The examination of the general public's opinion is as important to understand as the Republican Party and American-Polish community's opinion. Although the press in the United States and Britain praised their respected leaders for their success at the Yalta Conference, there was also critique over the agreements regarding Poland, particularly by those of Polish association. There was a tension between the official line of the agreements at Yalta and a public line which was set to sell the Yalta wholesale as an achievement for the establishment of the post-war world.

The American Press:

“President Roosevelt betrayed not only Poland, but the hundreds of Polish-Americans who trusted him to uphold the principles of freedom which have guided America from its earliest days.”

Chicago Tribune, “F.D.R Betrayed all at Yalta, Poles Charge” ⁵¹

Two sides of the Crimean Conference were revealed through the American press. One being government officials' support for the decisions reached at the Conference and the second being a minority of government officials, mostly Republicans, and members of the Polish community in America who criticized the Yalta agreement, largely over the decisions made for the future of Poland. The majority who supported the Yalta agreement largely argued that the decisions at Crimea should be adopted in support of President Roosevelt, the alliance, and for

⁵¹ “F.D.R Betrayed all at Yalta, Poles Charge: More Yielding to Reds Due? They Ask.” *Chicago Tribune*. March 5, 1945. (Accessed October 15, 2019).

Future cooperation with the alliance. On the other side, the vocal minority, being a number of Republicans in Congress and the Polish community, voiced their dissatisfaction with the decisions made for Poland at Yalta which they argued contradicted the Atlantic Charter and legalized Soviet interference in Polish internal affairs. The vocal minority was proven to be correct not too long after the Conference between the Big Three. On March 30, 1945, Stalin “scrapped the Yalta formula on Poland in which he promised President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill the provisional Communist government he set up in Poland at Lublin would be broadened to include members of the Polish government in London.”⁵²

Representative O’Konski, who was a Republican, voiced sharp criticisms over the agreements reached at Yalta just two days after the conclusion of the Conference. O’Konski interrupted the House of Representatives to denounce the Crimean Big-Three agreement as a “sell-out of Poland” after fellow members Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas (D-California) and Representative Luther A. Johnson (D-Texas) had praised the results from the Conference. The actions taken by the Big Three were condemned as a betrayal “to the most freedom-loving people, the Poles, who have done more to crush Nazism than any other nation on Earth.”⁵³ O’Konski hyperbolically claimed the actions of the Big Three were a betrayal to Poland.⁵⁴ Just two days after the conclusion of the Conference, a division was seen in Congress

⁵² “Stalin Scraps Yalta Promise to Free Poland: London Emigres Barred from Lublin.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. March 30, 1945. (Accessed October 15, 2019).

⁵³ “Rep. O’Konski Hits Big-3 Sell-Out.” *The Evening Bulletin*. February 13, 1945. (accessed October 1, 2019).

⁵⁴ It should be stated that we now know that it was not only the Germans who massacred Jews, but also some Poles. For more information see Jan T. Gross, “Who Murdered the Jews of Jedwabne?” In *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, 79-89. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2001. Accessed February 3, 2020.

over the interpretation of the agreements reached by the Allied Powers. Here, it can be seen that Democrats Douglas and Johnson were quick to sing praise over the agreements reached at Yalta but were condemned by Republican O’Konski. In Russia, Representative O’Konski was attacked by *Pravda*, a Communist party newspaper of the Soviet Union, for his criticism of the Yalta declaration on Poland. *Pravda* claimed that O’Konski had given fascist propaganda concerning liberated Poland and declared that it was surprising that some Republicans in the House approved of his stance.⁵⁵ Although *Pravda* represented a Stalinist point of view, it is important to note the official communist line which was to maintain the Polish agreements in their terms. The Communist paper seemed almost shocked that a member of Congress would go against the Commander in Chief and attempted to label O’Konski and other claims Republican’s made as absurd. The paper from Russia grouped the American dissenting opinions of the Conference as being those of the Republican Party, although not the entire party.

On the same day that Representative O’Konski voiced his disapproval over the conclusions reached at Yalta, Charles Rosmarek, president of the Polish-American Congress, deplored the territorial adjustments outlined by the Big Three. Rosmarek declared their decision a “direct contradiction to all sacred pledges of the Atlantic Charter” and a horrible blow to the cause of freedom. The “docile submission” to Russia’s demands for the lands seized during the partitions of Poland as Germany’s collaborator was a distortion of Polish war aims and reaffirmed the Molotov-Ribbentrop line of 1939.⁵⁶ Charles Rosmarek and the Polish-American Congress represented the majority of Polish-Americans in their discontent over the Yalta

⁵⁵ “Pravda Assails Rep. O’Konski For Yalta Criticism.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. February 19, 1945. (Accessed October 15, 2019).

⁵⁶ “Action in Poland Scored: Polish-American Congress says Country Betrayed.” *The Evening Bulletin*. February 13, 1945. (accessed October 1, 2019).

Conference. The Polish-Americans argued that the territorial adjustments outlined at the Conference directly contradicted the Atlantic Charter which featured Roosevelt's vision for a postwar world which featured open trade, self-determination, collective security, and disarmament. While many were singing praises for the agreements reached at the Conference, there was a Polish minority who criticized the contradictions between the Atlantic Charter and what was decided at Yalta.

On February 15, 1945, Raymond Daniell of the *New York Times* reported from London that "President Roosevelt tried his best at Yalta to get Premier Stalin to agree to let reconstituted Poland keep Lwow," which he ultimately failed to do. Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt accepted and recognized Russia's territorial claims and in turn, made certain agreements on the new government to supplant the London exiles and the Provisional Government sponsored by Russia. The government would feature a broad and representative base. Premier Stalin seemed to make it clear that he had no intentions of interfering with the domestic affairs of the new Polish state. Furthermore, Daniell described that the Poles in London were confused over the agreements. Premier Tomsaz Arciszewski's government refused to have any part of the Yalta settlement, holding that it was a violation of the Atlantic Charter. The Peasant Party of the former Premier Stanslaw Mikolajczyk was unanimously in favor of co-operation with the powers. The Socialist Party was torn between the sides of Arciszewski and the Peasant Party.⁵⁷ Daniell described the confusion amongst the Poles in London and identified a division within the Polish community. Poles in London were split over whether or not to accept

⁵⁷ "Roosevelt Tried to Preserve Lwow: Failure to Keep City for Poland Seen Compensated for by Russian Concessions." *New York Times*. February 15, 1945. (Accessed October 30, 2019).

the agreements reached at Yalta. Poles from the Arciszewski government held a valid argument that the decisions reached on Poland violated the terms of the Atlantic Charter. The Peasant Party also held a valid stance that they should support the cooperation between the powers. Daniell's reporting revealed the mixed reactions to the Yalta in Poland and portrayed confusion amongst the Poles.

On a local level, Rhode Island reflected similar divisions over the Polish agreements. Joseph Janas, president of the Polish-American Council of Rhode Island, stated that representatives would meet on February 18th at Central Falls to draft a protest which would be sent to the Secretary of State and members of both branches of Congress. Janas claimed that information was coming to Americans of Polish extraction which indicated that Poles in Poland who were loyal to the government in exile were either being murdered by Russians or sent to Siberia. He also expressed fear in that the upcoming secret election in Poland agreed upon at Yalta would be a "joke because it will be controlled by the Russian secret police" who now completely controlled Poland.⁵⁸ Janas, who was speaking on behalf of the Polish people in Rhode Island, made it clear to the press and to the United States government what their stance was on decisions made at Yalta. Many Poles in Rhode Island did not accept Russia's free hand to exercise control over Polish internal affairs. An examination of Janas' activism revealed the deep discontent for the Yalta agreement felt by many Poles in Rhode Island.

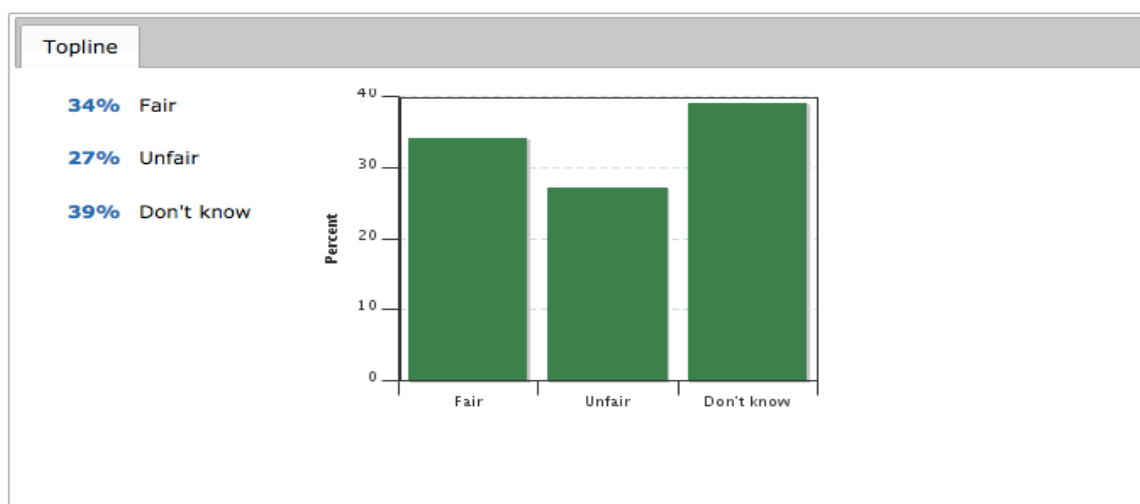
However, the public was not simply split in favor of or in opposition to the agreements reached on Poland at the Yalta Conference; there was a large portion of the public who was uneducated on the matter. Several polls conducted by the Office of Public Research following

⁵⁸ "Protest Planned by Polish Groups: Janas Charges Russians Preparing Courts to Persecute Patriots." *Providence Journal*. February 18, 1945. (Accessed October 13, 1945).

the conclusion of the Yalta Conference reveal both confusion and division over the topic. One survey question asked 1,244 individuals a very general question which stated, “Do you think it (the Big Three agreement on Poland) was fair or unfair to Poland.” As illustrated below, 34% reported that the Big Three was fair, 27% unfair, and that 39% did not know.⁵⁹

Do you think it (the Big Three agreement on Poland) was fair or unfair to Poland?

(Source: Office of Public Opinion Research Roosevelt Survey, Feb, 1945)



Foremost, the Office of Public Research acknowledged that there was public division in asking if the Big Three were fair to Poland at Yalta. The results displayed that the Polish question asked by surveyors revealed a sense a division amongst the American public. It is certainly noteworthy that the percentage of respondents who viewed the treatment of Poland either as “Fair” or “Unfair” were almost equal, although there is a 7% difference in favor of it being “Fair.” However, it is also important to note that the largest group was neither; the largest group was 39% who responded that they did not know. This statistic revealed that the majority of the public

⁵⁹ Office of Public Opinion Research. Office of Public Opinion Research Roosevelt Survey, Feb, 1945 [survey question]. USOPOR.45-039.Q06B. Office of Public Opinion Research [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Dec-9-2019.

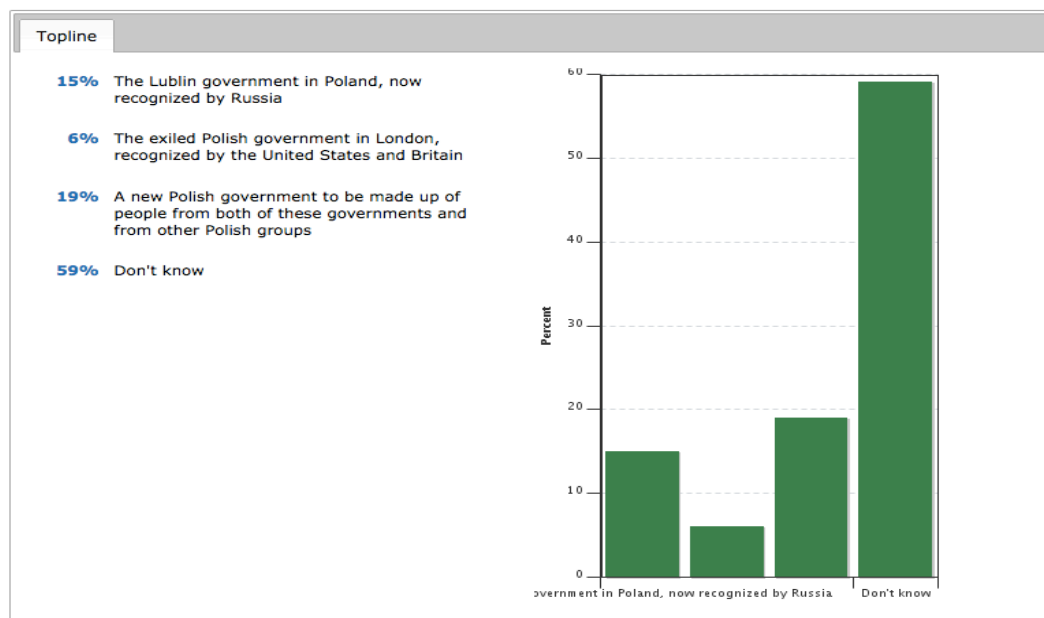
was not concerned over the Polish treatment at Yalta, nor the Polish situation. The West could oversell the Yalta Agreement, especially agreements reached on Poland, due to the ignorance and lack of care within the democratic bases. The general public was more focused on compromise, peace, and cooperation rather than the fine details of the agreement.

Also, during the month of February, 1,244 individuals were asked by Roosevelt's Office of Public Opinion Research "At the conference of the Big Three, an agreement was reached on the question of which government should be recognized for Poland. Do you happen to know which of these governments was agreed upon by the Big Three?" The four possible answers included: the Lublin government, the exiled Polish government in London, a new Polish government to be made up of these governments and from other Polish groups, and don't know. As depicted below, only 19% of respondents knew the correct answer which was "A new Polish government to be made up of people from both of these governments and from other Polish groups." The overwhelming majority, 59%, recorded that they did not know which government would be recognized for Poland.⁶⁰ The poll, exemplified on the following page, revealed that a large portion of the public did not know important details which made up the Polish agreement in Yalta.

⁶⁰ Office of Public Opinion Research. Office of Public Opinion Research Roosevelt Survey, Feb, 1945 [survey question]. USOPOR.45-039.Q07. Office of Public Opinion Research [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Dec-9-2019.

At the conference of the Big Three, an agreement was reached on the question of which government should be recognized for Poland. Do you happen to know which of these governments was agreed upon by the Big Three? If you don't happen to know, just say so....The Lublin government in Poland, now recognized by Russia. The exiled Polish government in London, recognized by the United States and Britain. A new Polish government to be made up of people from both of these governments and from other Polish groups.

(Source: Office of Public Opinion Research Roosevelt Survey, Feb, 1945)



The majority of the public was largely ignorant over the details of the Polish agreement reached at Yalta and therefore, the Polish issues did not matter to many. The first poll revealed that 39% of respondents did not know if the Big Three agreement on Poland was fair or unfair, and the second poll revealed that 80% of respondents did not know or answered incorrectly on which government would be recognized for Poland. Therefore, issues over Poland did not matter to many citizens. Roosevelt did not need to worry about Polish sentiment because by the time of Yalta, he had already been re-elected and had less reason to worry about Polish sentiment within the United States.⁶¹ Afterall, there were only five or six million Poles in America at the time.⁶² Ultimately, the Polish American Congress came together after the Yalta Conference and gave

⁶¹ Dianna Preston, *Eight Days at Yalta: How Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin Shaped the Post-War World*, (Picador, 2019): P.163.

⁶² Ibid. p.166.

immediate and sharp criticism. President Rozmarek argued the agreement abandoned the Atlantic Charter and implied that Roosevelt and Churchill were just as guilty as Stalin. The Polish American Congress was deeply hurt by the decisions and felt abandoned, especially because over 90% of the Polish community voted for Roosevelt in 1944.⁶³ The general public was ignorant over the Polish agreements, but the Polish community felt deeply betrayed by Roosevelt.

The *Evening Star*, a Washington D.C. paper, discussed British affairs in the Commons following their vote to defeat a motion of protest against the Big Three's plan for the future of Poland. The House of Commons overwhelmingly defeated the motion by 396 to 25. The vote followed Foreign Secretary Eden's argument to the Commons that when the Polish settlement was final, Poland would be as strong if not stronger than the state which existed in 1939.⁶⁴ The memorandum in the Commons which was defeated revealed the minority dissent regarding the plan for the future of Poland. The article displayed to the American public that the majority of officials in London viewed the Yalta agreement positively. The *Evening Star's* account of the motion filed in the Commons revealed that much like in America, only a minority was in dissent of the Polish agreements reached in Yalta.

Sumner Welles, the former Under Secretary of State, weighed his opinion that overall, Yalta was a major accomplishment which "will always stand out as a gigantic step toward the ultimate establishment of a peaceful and orderly world." Welles described how it was easy for

⁶³ Richard C. Lukas, "The Polish American Congress and the Polish Question, 1944-1947," *Polish American Studies* 38, no. 2 (1981): 39-53, (Accessed March 7, 2020).

⁶⁴ "Commons Votes Down Censure of Polish Plan: Eden Says Decision on Frontiers may Make Nation Stronger." *The Evening Star*. February 28, 1945. (Accessed October 13, 2019).

people to pick out flaws but concluded that “in the larger sense, the practical accomplishments obtained at Yalta far outweigh all valid objections which can be raised.” Four “outstanding achievements” were cited by Sumner which included: the announcement of the United Nations meeting in San Francisco on April 25, the inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism, the decision reached concerning the future of Poland, and the joint agreement of the three major powers to aid the liberated peoples of Europe by democratic means which assured the United States would see a full role post-war Europe.⁶⁵ Welles’ article, with the insight of a former government official, attempted to quell criticisms of Yalta and cast it in a positive light.

In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Daniel Seligman argued that the most serious difficulty with the Yalta was not the territorial question, but rather the violation of the Atlantic Charter. Specifically, Seligman cited the flagrant violations of self-determination, freedom of fear, and use of force in international relations to be abandoned. The letter concluded that if the United States found themselves unable to stem the totalitarian wave, they should not delude themselves into thinking that the vicious outrage represented a just settlement.⁶⁶ Seligman voiced a popular argument that the Big Three’s decisions at Yalta contradicted the Atlantic Charter’s statement of self-determination. Due to this violation, the Soviets were now interfering with Polish domestic affairs through systematic deportations, murders, and strong-arm methods. Seligman voiced that the devastated people of Eastern Europe should have a chance to work

⁶⁵ “Sumner Welles Expresses Second Thoughts on Yalta: Says Declaration Has Stipulated Independent Public Opinion; Outlines Four Top Achievements of Recent Conference by Big Three.” Copyright 1945, *Providence Journal Co.* and *New York Tribune Inc.* February 28, 1945. (Accessed October 14, 2019).

⁶⁶ “Plan for Poland Questioned: Decisions Announced from Yalta are Regarded as Unfair.” *New York Times*. March 24, 1945. (Accessed, October 28, 2019).

things out for themselves, which was the view of many. In an ideal scenario, self-determination would be the plausible solution, but the fact was that the Red Army controlled Poland and most of Eastern Europe and the Declaration of Liberated Europe was being enforced through Stalin's terms.

William Henry from the *Wall Street Journal* described the uncertainty of the alliance between the United States and Russia and questioned whether they could "do business with Stalin." Although there had been bright moments in the alliance, new developments such as the aggravation of the Polish situation revealed that there were conflicts of interest between the two emerging powers. Henry cited Russia's past actions to examine whether or not the United States and Russia could do business together which included: the violation of non-aggression treaties, disregard for the principles of the Atlantic Charter, and the violation of the Yalta agreement in Poland. The article warned of appeasement and Soviet unilateral action.⁶⁷ By May 1945, the alliance was beginning to crumble due to Stalin's broken promises. For the West, the breaking point in the relationship was Stalin's actions in Poland which, to them, blatantly violated terms of the Atlantic Charter and the agreements reached at Yalta. President Roosevelt's trust in Stalin led him to believe that the Soviets would follow international agreements. However, the Soviets viewed the Yalta agreement as "just another scrap of paper."⁶⁸

The Polish community in the United States quickly criticized the agreements reached on Poland at the Yalta Conference through the press. Articles such as those of Joseph Janas and Daniel Seligmann's letter to the editor displayed public discontent with the result of the Yalta

⁶⁷ "After Victory in Europe: Can we do Business with Stalin?" *Wall Street Journal*. May 25, 1945. (Accessed, October 28, 2019).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Conference. The common argument was that the agreement blatantly violated terms of the Atlantic Charter and the Big Three's decision did not represent the will of the Poles. The polling done during the February 1945 depicted the public division over whether or not Poland was treated fairly by the Big Three, although a large portion of the public was unsure on the matter. There was a clear tension between the government line on the decisions reached at Yalta and public opinion. The general public did not care about the Polish agreements and the Polish community greatly cared and were dissatisfied with the agreements of Yalta.

The British Press:

“The Polish Government declares that the decisions of the Three-Power conference concerning Poland cannot be recognized by the Polish Government and cannot bind the Polish Nation.”

The Times, “The Polish Refusal: Charge of Fifth Partition: Curzon Line”⁶⁹

On February 13th, 1945, the *Times* in London articulated that “unbound satisfaction was expressed in London last night with the results of the Crimea Conference.” Only eight days were needed to reach decisions on numerous matters which revealed the constructive and friendly spirit in which all parties approached their tasks.⁷⁰ The *Times* asserted that the “Polish question,” was to be regarded as one of the greatest achievements for the conference. The new democratic Provisional Government that was to be formed representative of all democratic Poles and the

⁶⁹ “The Polish Refusal: Charge of the Fifth Partition: Curzon Line.” *The Times*. February 14, 1945. (Accessed, October 1, 2019).

⁷⁰ “Eight Day’s Decisions: A Constructive Record: Death Sentence on Nazism.” *The Times*. February 13, 1945. (Accessed October 1, 2019).

acceptance of the Curzon Line with slight modifications were acclaimed to be major successes.⁷¹

The Diplomatic Correspondent for the *Times* attempted to express the satisfaction with the results of the Conference on behalf of himself and other London officials. However, the Diplomatic Correspondent did not make any critiques of the Conference and seemingly wholeheartedly took the results as a success for the nation, for the alliance, and for the world.

The following day, another article in the *Times* described how prior to the meeting at Yalta, the Polish Government handed the governments of Britain and the United States a memorandum in which Poland expressed its hopes that these governments would not make any decisions without the consultation and consent of the Polish government. The memorandum stated that Poland was willing to seek a solution through international procedure and with due respect for the rights of the two parties concerned. Ultimately, the method adopted was “a contradiction of the elementary principles binding the allies and constitutes a violation of the letter and spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the right of every nation to defend its own interests.”⁷² The Polish government in exile quickly critiqued the Conference which rapidly appeared in the London press. Polish Prime Minister Arciszewski and the Cabinet made striking but accurate accusations that the plans outlined at Yalta not only contradicted the Polish government’s memorandum, but also the Atlantic Charter itself.

⁷¹ “Eight Day’s Decisions: A Constructive Record: Progress on Poland.” *The Times*. February 13, 1945. (Accessed October 1, 2019).

⁷² “The Polish Refusal: Charge of the Fifth Partition: Regret in London.” *The Times*. February 14, 1945. (Accessed, October 1, 2019).

The Polish Government declared that the decisions made at Yalta concerning Poland “cannot be recognized by the Polish Government and cannot bind the Polish nation.”⁷³ The intention to create a provisional government by enlarging the foreign appointed Lublin Committee with persons vaguely described as being democratic leaders from Poland and abroad only legalized Soviet interference in Polish affairs.⁷⁴ The Polish government in exile strongly criticized the decision to appoint democratic leaders from Poland and abroad. This, they argued, would give the Soviets a hand into the internal affairs of Poland which would undermine the Polish war aims of self-determination. The exiled government in London wanted to determine the future of their state by themselves.

The British Press aimed to describe America’s interpretation of the Yalta agreements and concur with American sentiment. In America, the press was singing almost in unison its praise of the Yalta declaration, although there were occasional newspapers which interpreted its details as a victory for Russia. However, the great majority accepted it as “important and encouraging that a spirit of compromise ruled over the meeting and, in spite of prompt and angry statements from Polish groups, cite the agreement concerning Poland as a case in point.”⁷⁵ It is especially unique that the London press examined public opinion in America. The description of American opinion captured the overwhelming positive consent of the agreements made at Yalta and praised the leader’s ability to compromise as a sign of encouragement in international cooperation. The press

⁷³ “The Polish Refusal: Charge of the Fifth Partition: Curzon Line.” *The Times*. February 14, 1945. (Accessed, October 1, 2019).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “Reassurance in U.S.: President’s Hand Strengthened: Effect on Congress.” *The Times*. February 14, 1945. (Accessed October 1, 1945).

voiced that there was simply a minority of Republicans who interpreted the conference as a win for Russia and acknowledged the Polish discontent in America.

On March 2nd, 1945, both Houses approved the Crimean decisions and Lord Addison took it upon himself to associate himself “whole-heartedly” with what had been said of the labors of the Prime Minister. He was glad to see the work being done to demilitarize Germany and proclaimed that the increased unity between “the great allies was largely due to the frankness of the Prime Minister and his readiness to face difficulties.” Addison further believed that the “Curzon line was, in main, as fair a boundary as could be drawn” and was not another partition of Poland. Further in regard to the to be established representative provisional government, Addison believed that the “Record of the Russian Government in their dealings with this country and the business world, long before the war, was a fine one, and the Prime Minister was fully warranted in protesting against the suggestion that our Russian allies were not going to play fair.”⁷⁶ Government officials largely utilized the press to show their support for the agreements reached at Yalta and the decisions made by Prime Minister Churchill. Addison’s account revealed the outpouring support from the government for the country’s leader and is reflective of the Houses decision to adopt the Yalta agreements. However, there was some skepticism regarding Poland voiced by Earl De La Warr, who was a member of the House of Lords:

It was not so much the agreement about Poland that was concerning some people but how the agreement was going to be carried out. They all hesitated to express any question of the good faith of any of our allies. They all felt extremely hopeful that this matter would in fact be adjusted according to the lines laid down in the agreement. What is the machinery to be set up for ensuring it?... He hoped that in our dealings with Russia we, as a nation,

⁷⁶ “Parliament: Crimea Decisions Approved by Both Houses: Future Steps to World Security: House of Lords: Lord Addison’s Tribute to Mr. Churchill.” *The Times*. March 2, 1945. (Accessed, October 1, 2019).

would speak straight to those with whom we were dealing and make them realize that we regarded cooperation with them as absolutely essential not only to our mutual relations but to the future peace of the world, and that if we were prepared to give cooperation we were prepared to ask for it. Cooperation must be real; it must not be appeasement. The Lordships should give their whole-hearted endorsement to the agreement, and insist on its being carried out because in its carrying out British honour was at stake.⁷⁷

Earl De La Warr argued that all members should support the Prime Minister when he attended conferences such as Yalta so that he would attend knowing that the British were behind him.⁷⁸

Although Earl De La Warr voiced his concerns over the practicality of the agreements and warned of appeasement, he ultimately embraced it for the sake of British reputation and honor. Even those within the government who had their reservations about the meeting and the agreements supported it in the spirit of the British cooperation within the alliance.

Although individual responses to the Yalta Agreements in the papers were scarcer than the American papers, a letter to the editor of *The Times* depicted disapproval over the methods of the Lublin Committee. The Yalta pledge to hold free and unfettered elections reaffirmed the Atlantic Charter, but the methods of the Lublin Committee breached, in word and action, the article. The author argued that the Lublin Committee was entitled to participation but not domination.⁷⁹ The disapproval voiced by the author was not so much in the actual text of the

⁷⁷ “Parliament: Crimea Decisions Approved by Both Houses: Future Steps to World Security: House of Lords: Principles of Democracy.” *The Times*. March 2, 1945. (Accessed, October 1, 2019).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ “The Lublin Committee: Letter to the Editor.” *The Times*. March 13, 1945. (Accessed February 16, 2020).

agreement, but more in the carrying out of it. The letter to the editor revealed that dissatisfaction was present in the public with the aftermath of the agreements reached in Poland.

The stances taken by the British press on the Yalta Conference proved to be strikingly similar to those displayed in the American press. In Britain, a majority of government officials' opinions voiced throughout the papers were supportive of Prime Minister Churchill and the agreements he reached with the alliance. I believe that the Yalta agreements were largely accepted in the Commons to uphold Britain's status and honor. Papers praised the spirit of compromise and cooperation rather than critiquing the actual text of the agreement. Much like in the United States, there were few government officials who avoided giving full support of the agreements and sided with Polish groups in Britain, especially the Polish government in exile. Ultimately, the majority of American citizens did not care and or were ignorant about the Yalta agreements and their fairness to Poland. However, the Polish community in the United States as well as the Poles in exile in London were quick to argue that the agreements made on Poland at Yalta violated the terms of the Atlantic Charter. The majority of criticism in the press stemmed from people with Polish relation and opponents of President Roosevelt. America was willing to sell out Poland because it simply did not matter to many citizens.

CONCLIUSION

The debates over the “Polish Question” at the Yalta Conference is the central factor of the deterioration of relations among the Big Three. Issues over the establishment of the Polish border and the formation of a new provisional government were contested throughout the Plenary Sessions and resulted in the compromise stated in the Declaration of Liberated Europe. It was Stalin’s actions in Poland which violated the terms of the agreement and led to the demise of the alliance. Roosevelt and Churchill greatly oversold the agreements reached on Poland at Yalta to their governments and to their people. Due to Roosevelt’s recent re-election and an ignorant public who lacked knowledge on the agreements, he was able to oversell the agreements under the guise of cooperation. The press revealed that only the Republicans in Congress and people of Polish association voiced their discontent with the agreements and claimed that it was a violation of the terms stated in the Atlantic Charter. Telegrams sent between Roosevelt and Churchill following the Conference reveal that Stalin’s actions in Poland was the cause of friction in the alliance and the two struggled to address the crisis. Poland was the central issue at the Yalta Conference which resulted in a compromise that favored Stalin and caused the deterioration of the alliance.

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