

CWW/A1.5 – Yalta and Potsdam (page 1 of 2)

Directions: Using information from the Wartime Experience Chart and the major decisions made at Yalta and Potsdam (below), consider the impact of WWII upon the US and the USSR. In your group first discuss, and then prepare a written response of no more than 150 words to the following question, using evidence from both the chart and the descriptions of Yalta and Potsdam: "Based upon their WWII experiences, what should be the top three foreign-policy goals of the US in 1945? What about the Soviet Union?" Be prepared to defend your answer to the class.

Yalta

In February 1945, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Secretary General Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, met at the Black Sea resort city of Yalta to make plans both for the defeat of Germany and world order after WWII. Although many of the details were left undecided (and as a result became cause for tension between the former allies), the Big Three, as they were come to be known, agreed to the following:

- The Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan, and in exchange, the Soviets would be granted a sphere of influence in Manchuria.
- Germany would be divided into separate occupation zones, but the Big Three would enact common policies and plans in each of the zones.
- The Soviet Union was entitled to compensation for the destruction of property and industry that occurred during the invasion and occupation of Soviet territory during the war.
- The Soviet Union agreed to free elections in Eastern Europe.

The Allies had a much harder time agreeing to anything in regard to Poland and much of Eastern Europe. Although Stalin promised free elections, the Soviet Union, fearing a future invasion from Western Europe, sought the creation of buffer states – countries with strong Communist governments allied to the Soviet Union. Although the US and Great Britain conceded to Communist involvement in the new governments, they maintained their goal of free elections throughout Europe.

While consensus was not possible on many issues, the Yalta Conference is significant in that it did suggest that cooperation between the three powers was possible.



Russian Premier Stalin talks with gestures to his Foreign Minister Molotov at the Palace, Yalta, Crimea, Russia.

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<http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/action/ExternalIdSearch?Id=197000&JavaScript=true>

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Last meeting of the Potsdam Conference in Potsdam, Germany. Seated around the conference table, President Harry S. Truman is on right side of the table. Secretary of State James Byrnes is seated to the President's right hand. Adm. William Leahy is seated to the right hand of Mr. Byrnes. Generalissimo Josef Stalin of the Soviet Union is at top of table. Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet foreign minister is seated to the left of Prime Minister Stalin in the photo. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee is at the bottom left side of the table in the photo. Source: Truman Presidential Library, National Archives, <http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/action/ExternalIdSearch?id=198951>

Potsdam

In April 1945, as the European theater of the war was nearing an end, the Allied Powers all converged on Berlin, Germany. The Soviets entered the city first and occupied it for two months. Leaders of the three wartime allies met again in Potsdam, Germany from July 17 – August 2, 1945. At Potsdam, Harry Truman represented the US, following FDR's death. Truman was more suspicious of Stalin and of Soviet expansionism than FDR. In the months following Yalta, the Soviets had consolidated their control over Eastern Europe and had not lived up to their promises of free elections in Eastern Europe. At Potsdam, the Allies agreed to the following:

- An Allied Control Commission to run Germany until a final decision could be reached on the nature and powers of a new German government.
- Germany would be demilitarized, de-nazified, and until a final decision could be made about a German government, divided into four occupation zones, each administered by one of the Allied powers and France (the French were given a zone carved out of the British and US sections).
- The capital, Berlin, was also divided between the four powers.

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- Each of these four occupying nations could affect the way the nation and the city started to rebuild after the war. The Soviets, for example, were concerned with maintaining strong controls over their zone so as to prevent any potential future invasion from the west (as they had just experienced in the prior decade). American, French, and British rule, in contrast, promoted capitalism and liberal democratic government.
- Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes forced the Soviets to agree that occupying nations could exact reparations only from their own zone, while also allowing for the shipping of industrial goods from the Western zones of occupation in exchange for agricultural goods from the Soviet Zone.
- The Western border of Germany was settled.

Berlin Divided, Post-WWII

