

Rebuilding Europe: Potsdam Conference, 1945

International History Olympiad:
Historical Simulation



International History
OLYMPIAD

Run by the staff of the International History Olympiad

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Dear Olympians,

Welcome to the simulation of the Potsdam Conference, here in Berlin 2018! My name is Shravan Balaji, and I am a former history bowl player and Model United Nations participant from East Brunswick High School in New Jersey, USA, and I currently attend the University of Pennsylvania. I served as captain of my high school's Academic Team and Secretary General of our Model United Nations program, and continue to be involved with MUN at Penn while working for NHBB. Both activities have meant a lot to me, and I see no better place to combine them than at the International History Olympiad's Historical Simulation. Together, you and your fellow history-loving peers will engage in an enthralling simulation of a council featuring the very land you are currently sitting in.

At the Olympiad you will have a chance to take part in a historical simulation of the Berlin Conference which will deal with responding to the Rebuilding Europe in 1945. For those of you familiar with Model United Nations conferences, this simulation will operate similar to Model United Nations committees, using very basic parliamentary procedure with a "chair" to moderate debate. However, these simulations will include "crisis" elements, giving substantive updates in committee to delegates that will alter the flow of debate and require participants to use their critical thinking abilities to embrace and delineate complex solutions. We will provide separate documentation to specify procedural elements; we assure you they will be accessible and straightforward. I speak for both myself and all the Olympiad staff in saying that we hope you greatly enjoy this simulation.

Regarding the substantive content of this brief, you will have attached a basic topic background piece. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me at shravan@historybowl.com. I'll be happy to help throughout the preparation process so we have the best possible time in committee.

Sincerely,
Shravan
Balaji

CURRENT SITUATION

After a long period of bellicose activity, the world has suffered some major changes. Germany finally surrendered on May 8th after an enduring state of war involving several countries such as France, the United States (U.S.A), the United Kingdom (U.K), and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R), among others. It's been agreed that in order to negotiate the terms after the war's cessation,

American President Harry S. Truman, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (and his successor, Clement Attlee), along with other allied leaders gather for a conference in the German city of Potsdam. At the conference, topics such as the German economy, punishment for war criminals, land boundaries and reparations, relevant issues are to be discussed.

The war had an immense impact on the world, resulting in enormous changes on a global scale that had ever been witnessed before. The numbers are hard to grasp: nearly 60 million deceased, 25 million of them Soviet. The word "genocide" was created to refer to the murder of 6 million of Europe's Jews, Gypsies and "undesirable elements" by the Nazis. Socially, the impact of the war was also great. Immigration became a reasonable solution for those who felt threatened, and this resulted in millions fleeing their homes, millions more were forcibly moved in Germany, Japan and even the United States. Six months ago, on February 4th, 1945, The Yalta conference was held. The conference took place some months before Nazi Germany actually surrendered and the war state was declared over, but it was crucial as it led the country leaders to formulate war strategies, and plan out what it would be done with the postwar world if the war was won, as it was obviously

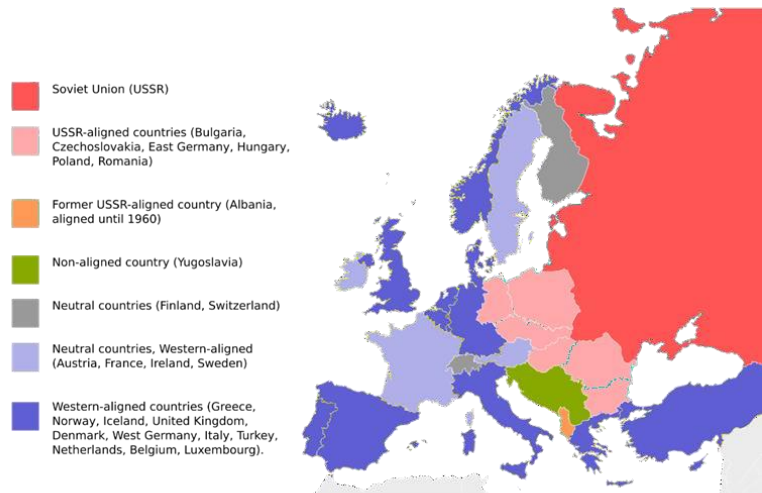


Figure 1 Europe showing USSR's political influence over other countries

going to be very different. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin met at Yalta to talk about their petitions, needs and requirements to form said plans.

A number of things were decided at Yalta. The Soviets were conceded a “sphere of influence” in Manchuria in exchange for their promised help with the fight against Japan After the inevitable defeat of Germany. The Allied leaders also discussed the future of Germany, Eastern Europe and the United Nations. Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin discussed French inclusion in the postwar governing of Germany, and that Germany should assume some responsibility for war reparations. The Soviets were allowed to maintain their control over the Eastern European countries, but the USA and the UK allowed this on the condition that the soviets promised to allow free elections in these countries.

Despite these important decisions made at Yalta, some of the topics discussed remained unsettled due to a lack of agreement between the allies. The most prominent issue that remained uncertain was the status of Poland, which was, at this point, under the control of the Red Army. A pro-communist provisional government had also been established. Stalin was insistent that Russia’s interests in that nation should be upheld. The United States and Great Britain considered that the London-based non-communist Polish government-in- exile was truly representative of the Polish people. The final agreement solely stated that a “more broadly based” government should be established in Poland. Free elections to determine Poland’s future were called for some time in the future.

On July 17, 1945, U.S. President Harry S. Truman, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met in the Berlin suburb of Potsdam to discuss issues relating to postwar Europe and plans to deal with the ongoing conflict with Japan.

It should be pointed out that the Soviet attitude during WWII was that they had borne the burden of most of the fighting, their country had been savaged, their people decimated and the repeated pleas for the Americans and British to open a second front in Western Europe went largely ignored.

Furthermore, the European war ended when Soviet troops attacked and entered Berlin. The prize went to the Soviets and although the Allies jointly claimed victory, it was the soviet action and sacrifice that ended the war.

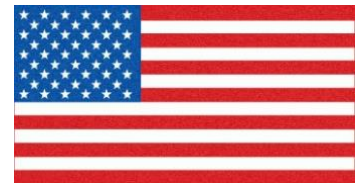
It is claimed by some historians then, that the principal motive of Truman regarding Japan was not to save American lives by prolonging the war in the Pacific but rather to force a Japanese surrender as quickly as possible, without the need for Soviet intervention. The only way this was possible was with the destructive power of atomic weapons.

BLOC POSITIONS

During the war, Britain and the USA were allies of the Soviet Union but the only thing that united them was their common enemy- Germany.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The post-war U.S.A was in a better position economically than any other country at the time. This economic base allowed the American society to prosper enormously. The country was surprisingly in a better place than before or during the war. However, several problems also presented themselves to the



Americans after the war. Regardless the fact that many citizens shared an optimistic view towards the country after their victories against Germany and Japan in 1945, only two years later, new threats appeared to destroy this new confidence. These new challenges appeared with the beginning of what is known as “the cold war”, which had already started to roughly develop only a few months after the cessation of the second world war due to the constant tension between the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R, mainly because of their difference in ideologies. These were the foundations of the long period of unfriendly behavior between capitalist U.S.A and communist U.S.S.R.

UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

The U.S.S. R's economy had suffered greatly in order to gain their victory in World War II. Their resources were heavily depleted and their industrial and agricultural income had diminished considerably. However, by 1945 the Red Army was in control of a considerable region of land, which

included Poland, the Baltic States, Northern Iran, Northern Norway, Eastern Germany, Austria, Manchuria, Korea and the Kuril Islands. Despite the amount of land under Soviet control, important parts of the country were in ruins. At least 25 million soviet deaths were recorded and many who survived were traumatized by the horrors of the war. A good deal of the Second World War was fought on Soviet territory, which resulted in the deaths of approximately 13% of the civilian population. One third of the national wealth was completely destroyed, and the industries that remained had been trying desperately to meet the economics demands of the country. But having won the war was a great boost to the Soviet moral, and the U.S.S.R. considered itself a great power.



UNITED KINGDOM

During World War II, the United Kingdom's imperial power had begun to crumble at an increased rate, due to the British defeats all over Europe and Asia between 1940 and 1942, and an elevated sense of empowerment in the colonies, who contributed substantial amounts of men and material to the

war effort. Government aid in reconstruction was seen as essential, which led to increasingly socialist government policies. The war not only heavily damaged the U.K. financially, reducing its economic independence, but also ended the old balance of power on which Britain had always depended on. By the end of the war, the U.K had recovered most of the territory that it had lost to Japan; regardless, their once great authority and respect seemed largely reduced.



BLOC'S DESIRES

The Big three had obviously different opinions and points of view regarding the

conference's agreements, as all of them wanted to get the best for their respective country.

The USSR's focus was on making sure Germany would never be a country that could wage war or menace them. They wanted to spread communism to Germany, and that made Truman fearful. When Germany was divided onto four, Stalin knew he had most of the Eastern European countries in his sphere of influence. When Truman told Stalin about the atomic bomb (fact he already knew), he was trying to make his country look more powerful at Potsdam, which hints at the US's view of the USSR. There was diplomatic battle to maintain and increase the reputation of each country after the war. This "reputation race" once a major contributing factor to the high tensions that led to the cold war.

One of Stalin's main aims was to get as much financial support from the reparations as he could, given that the U.S.S.R was ruined economically. The Soviets wanted a united but disarmed Germany, with each of the Allied powers uniting to determine the destiny of the defeated power. Stalin was looking to gain more influence in the United Nations after the war. For instance, he hoped to have control over 3 seats in the Security Council, which was the amount given to the combined U.K, U.S.A and France. The Soviet premier knew that he had a huge amount of influence during the conference because of the Red Army's position in Europe and he was willing to use it to his advantage. By this time, the USSR had almost half of the

European territories under Soviet influence. This fact made Joseph Stalin, stay very confident at the Yalta conference and this confidence remained during Potsdam. The main justification for maintaining a strong military presence in these countries was to maintain order and help rebuild nations which would conserve an attitude of collaboration with the Soviet communist ideology. Stalin desired a buffer zone around the western border of the Soviet Union as it was perceived that this would prevent future invasions of the motherland.



Figure 2: Political Cartoon of the time showing Stalin's apparent dominance on Yalta, fact that brought tension to how he would act in Potsdam.

The United States wanted to be recognized, one way or another, as the biggest of the Big Three. It also wanted leniency, as it did not want to repeat the mistakes of the Treaty of Versailles demanding too many indemnities of Germany, as they believed that is what made the Nazis so popular, thus leading to WWII. They wanted to appease the USSR's desire of power and land, so they tried to use the news of the atomic bomb (Trinity Test) to try and show themselves as a country that should be feared and followed. Whereas Roosevelt was more willing to compromise at Yalta, Truman maintained America's position firm. The United States wanted to treat Germany with leniency by allowing the occupying nations to exact reparations only from their own zone of occupation. Also, Truman did not intend to negotiate the same way as his predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, did in the Yalta conference. Roosevelt was very willing to compromise, whereas Truman's approach was very different and he was very determined to succeed in his demands and keep firm the American position. There was a major shift in American policy with the onset of the Truman Doctrine. Truman had strongly anti-communist political ideas.

The U.K hoped to salvage its diminishing authority and economical status. The British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was still present at the beginning of Potsdam; however, Clement Atlee took over him during the conference. Atlee had a very pacific view towards the conference and hoped to remain neutral when it came deciding between the US and the USSR. However, the U.K followed the USA's goals regarding the future of Germany, Eastern Europe and the war with Japan, but not as blind sheep. Some in Great Britain feared Soviet influence on the rest of Europe which had been rapidly growing in the past, spreading communism, which was the least of Britain's desires. Meanwhile, the United States wanted to be recognized, one way or another, as the biggest of the Big Three. It also wanted leniency, as it did not want to repeat the mistakes of the Treaty of Versailles demanding too many indemnities of Germany, as they believed that is what made the Nazis so popular, thus leading to WWII. They wanted to appease the USSR's desire of power and land, so they tried to use the news of the atomic bomb (Trinity Test) to try and show themselves as a country that should be feared and followed. Whereas Roosevelt was more willing to compromise at Yalta, Truman maintained America's position firm. The United States wanted to treat Germany with leniency by allowing the occupying nations to exact reparations only from their own zone of occupation. Also, Truman did not intend to negotiate the same way as his predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, did in the Yalta conference. Roosevelt was very willing to compromise, whereas Truman's approach was very different and he was very determined to succeed in his demands and keep firm the American position. There was a major shift in American policy with the onset of the Truman Doctrine. Truman had strongly anti-

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TENSIONS

Nazi Germany had been defeated, and the last "Big Three" meeting between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain happened towards the end of World War II. The choices made at the conference apparently settled a considerable number of the problems that were in dire need of addressing between the three wartime allies, yet the meeting was marked by suspicion and tension between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Even before the Potsdam conference began, the U.S. and British leader's suspicions concerning Soviet intentions in Europe were intensifying. Russian armies occupied most of Eastern Europe, including nearly half of Germany, and Stalin showed no inclination towards removing his control of the region.

Truman, who had only been president since Franklin D. Roosevelt had died three months earlier, arrived at the meeting determined to be firm with Stalin. He was angry with the Soviet Union for its arrest of the non-communist leaders of Poland and the presumed assassination of Jan Masaryk, leader of the Czechoslovakian opposition to communism. America and Britain were alarmed because the communists were coming to power in several countries in Eastern Europe. Churchill, who was running in the British general elections, do not want communism to expand any further, and he is mostly supporting Truman in this conference because of his political ideals and because of the democratic influence that he could bring to Europe. This conference would decide not only the fate of Germany, Poland, USSR, Great Britain and the USA, but the whole world. This conference would decide if this tensions would lead into a third world war, or to a final peace.

CHARACTER'S REPRESENTED ON THE COMMITTEE

The three main countries in Potsdam will be the ones represented on the committee by their chief of states and the 6 politicians of each country respectively, all with equal voice and importance. Those will be:

| USSR | USA | UK |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Joseph Stalin | Harry S. Truman | Winston Churchill |
| Viacheslav Molotov | William D. Leahy | Ernest Bevin |
| Andrei Gromyko | James F. Byrnes | Arthur Greenwood |
| Georgy Aleksandrov | Joseph E. Davies | Hugh Dalton |
| Georgy Malenkov | Harry H. Vaughan | James Chuter Ede |
| Nikita Khrushchev | George Marshall | Clement Attlee |
| Georgy Zhukov | Dean Acheson | Lord Woolton |

GERMAN DIVISION MAP



The map displays how the German territory won by the allies (The Big 3) was divided at the end of World War II in 1945. It shows way more than you think, as it can tell why did the specific owner of the terrain chose to keep that specific part of the area because of its locations, borders, etc.