The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 465
"The Yalta Conference"
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

As Germany and its ally Hungary were collapsing, the Big Three, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt, met at the Soviet resort town of Yalta to discuss the shape of the postwar world.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 465. The Yalta Conference.

Today I'm going to talk about the Yalta Conference, but before we go there, I want to discuss some events in Hungary. In recent episodes, I've told you about the Western Front, principally the German Ardennes Offensive, and the Soviet Red Army's offensive in January, in which they advanced from the Vistula to the Oder, putting the Red Army inside the territory of pre-war Germany. But while these battles were raging, the Red Army was also moving against Hungary, and that's where I want to begin today.

Let's turn back the calendar to late summer 1944, when Romania and Bulgaria switched sides in August and September, respectively. Those two nations then allowed the Red Army passage through their countries; in fact, with a little prodding from Moscow, the armies of the Soviet Union's two new allies joined the fight alongside the Red Army.

The next move by the Red Army was an offensive west into Yugoslavia from Bulgaria which began in late September, with the Bulgarian Army and Tito's Partisan fighters in Yugoslavia supporting the Soviet attack. The first Red Army units entered Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, on October 15 and secured the city by October 20.

The Soviet offensive into Yugoslavia threatened to cut off German occupation forces farther south in Greece. Even as the Red Army was moving into Belgrade, Germany was withdrawing its forces from the Balkans altogether.

Meanwhile, even before they reached Belgrade, Red Army units had crossed the northern border of Serbia into southern Hungary and captured the city of Szeged, Hungary's third largest. At this same moment, Winston Churchill was in Moscow to meet with Stalin and discuss, among other things, his "naughty document" spelling out British and Soviet spheres of influence in Eastern Europe after the war, which I told you about in episode 454. And while he was there, Churchill heard the guns of Moscow salute the capture of Szeged.

Szeged fell on October 11. That same day, Regent Miklos Horthy agreed to an armistice with the Soviet Union. When it was announced on October 15, Otto Skorzeny masterminded a plan to kidnap Horthy's son, force him to renounce the regency, and install the Hungarian fascist leader Ferenc Szalasi as leader of the country. I told you this story in that same episode.

Five days later, the same day the Red Army secured Belgrade, the Soviets captured Debrecen, in eastern Hungary, the country's second-largest city. At this same time, the US Army was securing its control over the German city of Aachen, episode 459.

The captures of these two cities, Szeged and Debrecen, largely got the Red Army through the mountains along the Hungarian-Romanian border and opened the way to Budapest. On October 28, eight days after the fall of Debrecen, Stalin personally ordered General Rodion Yakovlevich Malinkovsky, commander of the Second Ukrainian Front, to take Budapest, Hungary's capital, within five days.

That order was, shall we say, a trifle ambitious. When the senior commanders at Stavka reviewed the situation, they saw that immediately. A couple of important things were going on here. First of all, the Axis defenses had become tougher. The Hungarian Army, previously not especially noted for its determination, was now defending its homeland, which made all the difference. German forces in Hungary were receiving substantial reinforcements, as Hitler believed it was crucial to defend Hungary, the home of the only oil fields still under German control.

You'll recall me mentioning how the Wehrmacht's generals wanted reinforcements at the Vistula front, but Hitler overruled them and made Hungary a higher priority, because of those oil fields. Hitler was fond of saying that his generals didn't understand economics, and asked them how they would be able to fight if their panzers had no fuel.

On the Soviet side, Malinkovsky's front had waged a tough campaign through Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, and they needed time to recover. They needed replacements and new vehicles and supplies, all of which was complicated by the fact that the Soviet Union used a different railroad track gauge from the rest of Europe. Remember that? This decision was made in Imperial Russian times and was meant to make it difficult for anyone to invade Russia. But on the flip side, it was now making it harder for the Red Army to move into Europe.

Soviet and Romanian units were close to Budapest by November 7, when the offensive was suspended. The Red Army spent the next six weeks preparing for the final assault.

And what were they doing in Budapest while the Red Army was preparing to attack the city? I told you in episode 419. The new government of the fascist Arrow Cross Party, led by Ferenc Szalasi, resumed the deportations of Jewish residents of Budapest to the Auschwitz extermination camp. It was during this period, from mid-October to mid-December 1944 that the diplomats of neutral nations in Budapest began using their diplomatic privileges to help spirit Jews away. The most famous of these was the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, but there were many other diplomats from other neutral countries who did similar work, some of it funded from the United States.

Adolf Hitler designated Budapest another "fortress city," ordering the German and Hungarian soldiers in its garrison to fight to the bitter end. Szalasi appeared before the press in Budapest to make a statement on Hungary's diplomatic relations with Japan. He said nothing about the war, even though Red Army artillery fire could be heard in the distance.

In early December, Szalasi traveled to Berlin to meet with Hitler. I mentioned this meeting a few episodes ago and noted that it would be the last time Hitler met with the leader of a foreign government, but I didn't tell you what they discussed. Szalasi had come to Berlin to beg Hitler to withdraw his forces from Budapest and declare it an open city.

Hitler refused. In Budapest, Edmund Veesenmayer, the Nazi minister-plenipotentiary in Budapest, effectively the German governor-general of Hungary, insisted that Hitler's orders be followed. He said it did not matter if Budapest was destroyed ten times, so long as it saved Vienna.

No one was allowed to leave the city, except Szalasi and high-ranking Arrow Cross members. Veesenmayer, who called Szalasi a "buffoon," must have been glad to see him go. Arrow Cross fighters spent a good part of December hunting down as many of the estimated 50,000 Jewish people still living—or hiding—in Budapest, most of whom were women and children. When found, they were marched down to the banks of the Danube and executed in plain sight of the citizens of Budapest. There were many places where Jews were murdered, but nowhere else were the killings so brazen.

Citizens of Budapest were kept in the dark about the Red Army threat. During the week leading up to Christmas 1944, Radio Budapest spent its time broadcasting Christmas carols. Theaters and movie houses operated normally. Children collected bits of chaff dropped from Allied bombers and used it as tinsel on the Christmas trees.

The day after Christmas, Boxing Day, the Red Army cut the road from Budapest to Vienna. The city was now surrounded. About 80,000 Hungarian and German soldiers were trapped in the city, along with 800,000 civilians. Hitler ordered two SS panzer divisions transferred from the Vistula front to Hungary in an attempt to break the impending siege of the city, infuriating the German Army chief of staff, Heinz Guderian. The redeployment was for naught, as the panzer divisions were unable to reach Budapest.

In the city, no provision had been made to feed civilians, who soon began turning up at German and Hungarian army field kitchens to beg for food. Teenage Hungarian boys were recruited, or conscripted, into militia units to help defend the capital. Meanwhile, many soldiers, and even entire units, of the regular Hungarian Army were defecting to the Soviets.

Most of the Arrow Cross fighters had fled the city before it was encircled; those who remained continued to spend their time hunting down and killing Jews. One notorious Arrow Cross leader was a Catholic priest, Father Andras Kun, who wore his clerical collar and cassock, along with an Arrow Cross armband, as he led a death squad into hospitals to massacre Jewish patients and any non-Jewish Hungarians aiding them. Kun's death squad even seized Jews who had Swedish diplomatic papers. Eventually, even the Germans and the remaining Arrow Cross officials got tired of this and imprisoned Kun and his squad.

On December 28, two separate groups of Red Army soldiers under white flags entered Budapest to negotiate its surrender. The leaders and some of their subordinates in both groups were killed, although it is unclear whether these were deliberate killings by German soldiers or were accidents. In any case, the Soviet government proclaimed the killings deliberate in its propaganda broadcasts.

Two days later, the Soviet drive to capture the city began. Budapest was created in 1873 by the merger of two smaller cities on either side of the Danube River, Buda and Pest. The origins of those two names are unclear. The Red Army began its advance into Pest, on the eastern side of the Danube. Pest was built on flat terrain, with broad avenues, so taking it was relatively easy, as the German and Hungarian defenders chose to withdraw across the river and make their stand in the more crowded and hilly Buda.

The Germans attempted to supply the Budapest garrison by air, dropping parcels by parachute and landing supply gliders on city streets. Many of the parcels fell behind Soviet lines, while starving *budapesti* civilians raided those that landed in the city, even though being caught meant immediate execution.

The fighting in Buda was vicious and bloody. The locals knew the streets much better than the Red Army, who found themselves in a position similar to that at Stalingrad, except that this time, they were the attackers.

Adolf Hitler adamantly refused all requests by the garrison for permission to withdraw from the city, until the evening of February 11, 1945, when the German and Hungarian garrison commanders agreed to attempt a last-ditch night-time escape in defiance of their orders. Thousands of desperate civilians followed them. Most of them, soldiers and civilians alike, were killed, wounded, or captured. Fewer than one thousand German and Hungarian soldiers made it to Axis lines. What remained of the city's defenders surrendered two days later.

Budapest lay in ruins. More than 80% of its buildings were destroyed, as were every one of the city's seven bridges across the Danube. No other European capital, except for Warsaw, suffered so terribly. If you include the Pacific Theater, you can add Manila to this list. We'll talk about that later.

After taking the city the Red Army shot German wounded. They executed captured members of the SS and the Hiwis, those Russians and Ukrainians and other Eastern Europeans taken prisoner by the Germans who subsequently agreed to serve in the German Army. More than 100,000 ethnic Germans living in Hungary were rounded up and sent to the USSR for slave labor.

The Red Army refrained from mass killings of Hungarian soldiers, but more than half a million Hungarians, mostly men, were also sent to the Soviet Union for slave labor. No exception was made for Hungarian Communists or for partisans who had fought in the resistance against the Hungarian government. The Soviet counterintelligence agency, SMERSH, created in 1942, rounded up anyone known to have foreign contacts, including Jewish Zionists and Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg.

Looting was widespread. Soviet soldiers stopped civilians in the streets and robbed them at gunpoint. Even neutral embassies were looted. Tens of thousands of Hungarian women were raped, and there are reports of some younger women being forced into service in unofficial military brothels.

In February, when the Sixth SS Panzer Army was redeployed to the East following the failed Ardennes Offensive, Hitler sent it to Hungary, but Budapest had fallen before it arrived, so it was redeployed to defend Hungarian oil fields still under German control in the area of Lake Balaton in Hungary, block the Red Army from advancing on Vienna, and possibly force Stavka to redeploy to Hungary units along the Oder River threatening Berlin.

Initially, the German offensive was a success. It disrupted Red Army preparations for an offensive toward Vienna and pushed the Red Army back. Over the course of two weeks, the Sixth SS Panzer Army reclaimed a swath of Hungarian territory comparable in size to the amount of territory retaken in the first week of the Ardennes offensive in the West.

But as was the case in the Ardennes, the offensive stalled out and in March the Soviets counterattacked. By the time of the Soviet counterattack, the 17 panzer divisions in the Sixth SS Panzer Army had a total of 230 operational tanks. A full-strength German panzer division of the time was supposed to have 136 tanks, meaning these 17 panzer divisions had the effective strength of maybe two divisions. Such is the state of the German Army in 1945. The Sixth's commander, Sepp Dietrich, joked that "the Sixth is well named—we have just six tanks left."

The Soviet counterattack in March pushed the Germans back and quickly recaptured the gains made by the Germans. Soon the Sixth SS Panzer Army was in full retreat toward Vienna. By the

end of March, the Red Army had crossed the border into Austria and the Sixth was preparing to defend the city.

The German offensive at Lake Balaton in February 1945, codenamed Operation Southwind, represents the last German Army offensive of the war.

[music: Vivaldi, *Violin Concerto in F minor*, "Winter."]

Franklin Roosevelt appeared to be in very poor health for most of 1944, as attested by virtually everyone who saw him. As is the case with many politicians though, his campaigning in the fall of 1944 seemed to revive him. He showed a vigor not seen in him for some time.

After the election campaign was over and the votes were counted, that began to change. He went into decline. He resumed regular press conferences in the White House. A reporter from the *Chicago Sun* invited him to reflect on his Presidency. Roosevelt quipped, "The first twelve [years] were the hardest."

The weather on the day of Roosevelt's fourth inauguration, January 20, 1945, was frigid. Snow blanketed Washington. In light of the war and the weather, Roosevelt cancelled the customary march up Pennsylvania Avenue and instead took his oath of office on the south portico of the White House. His inaugural address was two pages long. He had in mind the shape of the post-war world as he told the crowd, "We have learned that we cannot live alone at peace, that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away. We have learned to be citizens of the world. We have learned, as Emerson said, 'The only way to have a friend is to be one.'"

One of those in attendance was Edith Wilson, widow of the former President. After the ceremony, she pulled Labor Secretary Frances Perkins aside and said of Roosevelt, "He looks exactly as my husband did when he went into his decline."

Two days later, Roosevelt and his entourage traveled to Norfolk, Virginia, where they boarded the cruiser USS *Quincy*, which took them to the island of Malta in the central Mediterranean. There he met up with Winston Churchill, and the two of them traveled, separately, to the Soviet resort town of Yalta, which is located on the south coast of the Crimean Peninsula, on the Black Sea, for the second meeting of the Big Three, the leaders of the three major Allied powers.

Churchill had wanted to discuss with Roosevelt the main issues likely to come up at Yalta in advance, but Roosevelt refused, out of concern that if they did so, Stalin would feel as if his two conference partners were ganging up on him. Of course, Stalin assumed they'd had those discussions anyway.

Churchill had proposed a meeting somewhere in the Middle East, but Stalin refused, due to his aversion to airplanes, and so Yalta it was, where Stalin could travel by train in his private rail car, which had once belonged to the Romanovs.

The main issues to be discussed, now that the war in Europe was close to finished, were the terms for the surrender and occupation of Germany, rebuilding the nations that had been under German occupation, and a new regime for the peace and security of the United Nations, something to replace the League of Nations.

For Churchill and the British delegation, their most important concern was the disposition of Eastern Europe generally, including the return and re-establishment of the pre-war governments in exile, and particularly Poland, the nation for which Britain had entered the war. Churchill had repeatedly stated that the British government felt honor-bound to restore pre-war Poland, with its pre-war government and pre-war boundaries.

For Stalin and the Soviet delegation, their main objectives were virtually the opposite of the British objectives. Stalin and his government wanted a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, which they viewed as essential to the future security of the USSR.

As for Roosevelt and his delegation, while they were sympathetic to the British position, the Americans made the unspoken assumption that the Red Army was already in control of Eastern Europe and there was little anyone else could do about that. As one American attendee put it, it was not about what Britain and America would let the Soviet Union do, it was about what they could get the Soviet Union to concede.

The Americans were more concerned about the situation in the Pacific. They were eager to get the Soviet Union, which still had a non-aggression pact in place with Japan, to repudiate it and enter the war. Roosevelt had been briefed by the Joint Chiefs, who told him that if Japan had to be invaded and subdued, the war would likely last into 1946 and would cost the United States more than a million additional casualties. Soviet support could save hundreds of thousands of American lives, though it would also mean the Soviets would be entitled to a share of the peace deal, despite their modest contribution to defeating Japan.

And yes, there was the Manhattan Project, but even as late as February 1945 it still seemed like something of a crap shoot. Roosevelt and his advisors weren’t even certain the bomb would work, and less certain, even if it did work, of how effective it would be in the struggle against Japan.

Yalta had once been the vacation spot of choice for the Russian aristocracy, as evidenced by the many palaces and grand vacation homes in the region. More recently, Joseph Stalin had used one of the palaces as his summer home. The Germans occupied Yalta from November 1941 through April 1944, and before they left they’d thoroughly trashed the place, and it was still a grim sight in 1945, moving Churchill to call it the “Riviera of Hades.” Workers spent months fixing up Livadiya Palace, built by Emperor Nikolai II in 1911 and now the venue for the conference, which convened on February 4.

As at Teheran, Franklin Roosevelt presided over the meetings. Also as at Teheran, Sergo Beria was on hand to eavesdrop on the British and American delegations. Beyond the usual hidden microphones in their rooms, the Soviets now had a new bit of technology they deployed, directional microphones that could pick up a conversation outdoors from two hundred meters away.

Both the British and the Soviets were concerned about Roosevelt's obvious poor health. At a Politburo meeting, Stalin said, "Let's hope nothing happens to him." Churchill's physician told him that every other patient he'd ever seen who looked like that was dead inside of six months. But by all accounts, and despite his physical condition, Roosevelt was alert and energetic during the conference. Averell Harriman, the US ambassador to the USSR, said that Roosevelt engaged in the talks at Yalta "with his usual skill and perception."

The conferees met eight times over eight days, in meetings that lasted three or four hours each, not counting additional discussions held over lunch and dinner. The Soviets pulled out all the stops, treating their guests to lavish meals rounded out with champagne and caviar from the Caucasus.

The conference discussed the pending end of the war in Europe and agreed to a plan for the postwar occupation of Germany. Previously, there had been some discussion about dividing Germany into two or more smaller countries, but at Yalta, the Big Three agreed instead to a united Germany, divided into four military occupation zones to be held by the USSR, the US, Britain, and France.

The French, by the way, were not invited to Yalta. Charles de Gaulle blamed Roosevelt for the cool relationship between them, but in truth the Soviets didn't want the French at the conference either, though the reluctantly conceded the point about allocating an occupation zone to the French, provided this would not reduce the size of their own occupation zone.

In the course of these discussions, Roosevelt remarked that the American public would not allow him to keep US soldiers in Europe for more than two years after the war. Churchill was shocked by the blunt admission, but Stalin was delighted by the news. He later remarked that it showed the weakness of democracies that their voting publics would not delegate to their governments the power to make such a long-term commitment. It seemed all the Soviet Union would have to do to become the dominant power in postwar Europe was to wait the Americans out.

At dinner the first evening, the mood became testy when the Soviets made clear their view that smaller nations ought to have no say in structuring the postwar world. Roosevelt attempted to lighten the mood by telling Stalin that in the United States, it had become common to refer to him as "Uncle Joe." Stalin was offended rather than amused. He found the nickname disrespectful.

The next day, the Allied Joint Chiefs met with their counterparts from Stavka to discuss military matters. The Soviets wanted the Western Allies to step up the pressure in Italy, to make it harder for the Germans to reinforce their front lines in Hungary. The Western military leaders cautioned Stavka that they had little control over how the Germans deployed their forces, and to the extent they had any, it was through bombing German railroads. The promised to do what they could to hinder German reinforcements to the Eastern Front.

Later that day came discussion about reparations. Stalin wanted US$10 billion worth of reparations payments from Germany. Indeed, though he did not share this with the conference, the NKVD was already hard at work in Poland and Eastern Germany, hunting for gold and art and other treasures, along with valuable machinery and factory equipment, as part of their reparations claim. The conference agreed to a broad framework, in which Germany would pay a total of $US20 billion in reparations payments, with half that amount earmarked for the Soviet Union. The details would be handled by a postwar commission on reparations.

Next ca me the most contentious issue of the conference: the future of Poland. Once again, Churchill declared that Britain had gone to war for the sake of Poland, and Britain was honor bound to seek the restoration of an independent Poland. Stalin countered that it was a matter of honor for the Soviet Union as well, “because the Russians have committed many sins against the Poles in the past, and the Soviet government wishes to make amends.” How he said that with a straight face, I’ll never know.

He went on to more pragmatic arguments. Historically, he said, Poland had been the corridor through which enemies had passed in order to invade Russia. Therefore, the Soviet Union had a national interest in the creation of a strong and independent Poland.

Then Stalin noted the current military situation. The provisional Polish government, he said, was in place and popular with the Polish people. True, it had not been elected, but neither had the Polish government in exile in London. For that matter, neither had de Gaulle’s government in Paris, yet the British and Americans supported that government. And why did they support that government? Because in order to prosecute the war against Germany, the Western Allies needed secure supply lines through France, which the de Gaulle government was able and willing to provide.

The same was true in Poland. In order for the Red Army to continue its struggle against Nazi Germany, it needed secure supply lines through Poland, which the provisional government could provide, while the Polish Home Army, the military wing of the government in exile, was hostile to the Red Army and had already killed 212 Soviet soldiers. Churchill had no choice but to affirm that attacks on the Red Army by the Home Army were unacceptable.

In truth, in Soviet-occupied Poland the NKVD was usually the aggressor, hunting down and arresting every member of the Home Army and every supporter of the government in exile it

could find, sending them to labor camps in the USSR after torturing them in order to extract the names of other Home Army supporters and the locations of their weapon stockpiles.

Stalin then pointedly asked Churchill how things were going in Greece. He was reminding Churchill of the "naughty document" they had discussed last October, and that Churchill had wanted Greece in the British sphere of influence and Stalin had agreed to that and had reined in the Communists in Greece to facilitate British control.

Moscow had also reined in the French Communists, a major portion of the French resistance, directing them to support the de Gaulle government. When Stalin drew the analogy between Poland and France, he was implicitly suggesting that if the Western Allies did not accept the government of Stalin's choice in Poland, he would withdraw Communist support from the government of his allies' choice in France.

Stalin also insisted that Eastern Poland, captured by Poland during the 1920 war with the USSR, be transferred back to the Soviet Union. Poland would be compensated with territories taken from German Prussia and Silesia.

In the end, the conference agreed on a "Declaration of Liberated Europe," which promised that "every liberated European nation had the right to democratic institutions of its choice and free elections at the earliest possible time." The sentiment was consistent with the earlier Atlantic Charter, and Churchill and Roosevelt felt it was something of a victory to get Stalin on the record supporting free elections, even if it was doubtful he would keep his word. Admiral William Leahy, who was present at the conference as an advisor to Roosevelt, told the President that the declaration was so vague that "the Russians can stretch it all the way from Yalta to Washington without ever technically breaking it."

Roosevelt replied, "I know, Bill, I know. But it's the best I can do for Poland at this time."

Stalin and his delegation were delighted with the *de facto* Western recognition of their control over Poland. With that settled, the Soviet delegation was more agreeable to the issues most important to Roosevelt. Stalin agreed to declare war on Japan, but told Roosevelt the Red Army would need three months after the end of hostilities in Europe to transfer its forces and prepare for war against Japan. In exchange for his pledge, Roosevelt agreed to recognize Communist Mongolia's independence from China, and to the return to the Soviet Union of what had been taken by Japan in previous wars with Russia: Sakhalin Island, the Kurile Islands, the naval base at Port Arthur, and recognition of Soviet rights in the railways in Manchuria.

Then came discussions on the United Nations. This was a touchy subject for Stalin, who was still resentful over the League of Nations expulsion of the Soviet Union in December 1939, after the USSR declared war on Finland. Roosevelt proposed an arrangement under which the assent of all five permanent members of the Security Council, the US, the UK, the USSR, France, and China, would be required to approve any action, effectively giving the Soviet Union veto power.

Stalin proposed that every one of the Soviet Union's 16 constituent republics be granted UN membership. The US and UK delegations considered and rejected that proposal, although they did agree to separate UN memberships for Ukraine and Belarus. In return, Stalin agreed to Roosevelt's proposal that the United States be granted three votes at the United Nations, for the sake of parity, though in fact the United States never followed through on that request. Stalin agreed the USSR would participate in an organizing conference for the United Nations, to be held in San Francisco in April.

The parties at the conference further agreed to conduct trials of Nazi war criminals and to a reciprocal repatriation agreement, which called for the prompt return of prisoners and displaced persons to their country of origin. The British and Americans wanted this agreement for the sake of the return of their prisoners of war being held in Germany. The Red Army had already overrun some German POW camps, and the Western Allies were eager to get a Soviet pledge to return their captured soldiers promptly. This was seen at the time as a routine arrangement, but it would turn out to be far more consequential than anyone in the West expected, as it made no provision regarding the wishes of the displaced person and thus would lead to large numbers of Soviet POWs and civilians who had collaborated with the Germans being forced to return to their homeland, where they could expect severe punishment. Indeed, even Soviet POWs who had not collaborated would be punished, as in Stalin's view they were traitors for allowing themselves to be captured.

Roosevelt and Churchill left Yalta feeling they had accomplished a lot. Roosevelt said it had turned out better than he had hoped. Churchill declared himself "pleased." The Soviets had agreed to enter the war against Japan and to participate in the United Nations. They had gotten no firm commitment on reparations, but had conceded to the inclusion of France in the occupation of Germany and to free elections in Eastern Europe.

On his way home from Yalta, Roosevelt stopped over in Algiers, where he invited Charles de Gaulle to meet with him to review what had been discussed at Yalta. De Gaull, who blamed Roosevelt for his not being invited to the conference, took offense at the suggestion that he go to Roosevelt to be informed of the conference deliberations. If Roosevelt wanted to meet, de Gaulle said, he could come to Paris.

On hearing this, Roosevelt declared de Gaulle a "prima donna." The remark got back to de Gaulle and only further soured their relations.

Back in Washington, on March 1, Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress. For the first time, he entered the House chamber in his wheelchair and spoke sitting down. He spoke for an hour, saying in part: "The Crimea Conference was a successful effort by the three leading nations to find a common ground for peace…This time we are not making the mistake of waiting until the end of the war to set up the machinery of peace. This time, as we fight together to win the war finally, we work together to keep it from happening again."

In London on February 23, Churchill reported on the conference to his War Cabinet. He told them “Poor Neville Chamberlain believed he could trust with Hitler. He was wrong. But I don’t think I’m wrong about Stalin.”

There followed three days of debate in Parliament, where some MPs were dissatisfied with the agreements made at the conference, and particularly the lack of any firmer commitment regarding Poland. The debate ended with a vote of confidence in Churchill and his government.

We’ll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I’d like to thank Jacqueline for her kind donation, and thank you to David for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Jacqueline and David help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone always, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you’d like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you’ll join me next week, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we turn to the campaign in the Philippines MacArthur took Leyte. Next stop, Manila. That’s next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. Just weeks later, on March 21, the US ambassador in Moscow, Averell Harriman, sent Roosevelt a cable that read in part, “we must come clearly to realize that the Soviet program is the establishment of totalitarianism, ending personal liberty and democracy as we know it.

A week later, 16 Polish opposition political leaders were invited to a conference with the provisional government. When they arrived, they were arrested by the NKVD and sent to Moscow, where they were tried and sentenced to the gulag.

[music: Closing War Theme]

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