

9. The USSR and Western Allies

Connection and contradiction of the Allies

The Soviet-German confrontation of 1941 was key, because it radically changed the USSR's international position. It made the country into one of the three leading superpowers in the anti-Hitler coalition. At the very beginning of the war, Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, had declared Britain an ally to the USSR, and said it would be willing to provide any aid necessary.²⁷⁴ Churchill made no secret of his opposition to communism, but Britain had no choice during the war with Nazi Germany. The British-Soviet agreement on joint action against Germany was signed on 12 July 1941, and contained an obligation for mutual assistance at the same time it forbade either side from negotiating separately with the enemy. After the attack on the USSR, the US State Department reacted in like manner; President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a declaration and a promise of assistance, and later Harry L. Hopkins, his personal ambassador, visited Moscow. In late September and early October 1941, a conference of the three superpowers—the USA, Britain, and the USSR—led negotiations in Moscow on the details of the assistance to be provided. Initially, the British and American publics were not completely enthusiastic about these declarations.²⁷⁵ This new state of affairs was of prime importance to the USSR. That the war had initially unfolded so catastrophically for the USSR, with most British and American politicians assuming it could hold out for a few weeks at most, was unimportant. Britain itself had been pushed out of Continental Europe and did not do well in North Africa or the Middle East.²⁷⁶ The United States expressed its sympathies for the USSR, but entered the war only in late 1941, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor shifted its focus to the Pacific. Within the European theatre, the US remained reliant on the British in North Africa and the Mediterranean.

The USSR's alliance with the Western powers was not problem-free. The country's relationship with Britain was hampered by a lack of confidence because of their problematic relationship during the interwar period, which the outbreak

274 Geller M./Nekrich A., *Utopia u vlasti*, p. 450.

275 Rzheshvsky O. A., *Stalin i Cherchil': Dokumenty, kommentarii*, pp. 12–15 and text of documents pp. 16–31.

276 Reynolds D., *Imperskaya diplomatia*, also Pozdneyeva L. V., *Geopoliticheskaya diplomatia*, in: *Soyuzniki v voyne 1941–1945*, pp. 355 and 369; Geller /Nekrich, *Utopiya u vlasti*, p. 450.

of war in 1939 did nothing to change.²⁷⁷ Stalin's sense of distance was reinforced by the USA's isolationist position, in keeping with American tradition. From the very beginning of the Soviet-German war in August 1941, Stalin was annoyed about Roosevelt and Churchill's declaration of the Atlantic Charter, which had not been consulted with the USSR. This was reflected in Stalin's originally restrained attitude towards the anti-Hitler coalition created on New Year's 1942.²⁷⁸

The thorniest problem in the relationships among the Allies nevertheless revolved around issues to do with the post-war map of Europe and the post-war border of the USSR. Stalin made his attitude clear during negotiations for the British-Soviet agreement of 1941–42:²⁷⁹ he insisted that the agreement would anchor the June 1941 Soviet border. On other issues, Stalin was more willing to compromise and seek out variant solutions. But he still made significant demands. He demanded the right to create Soviet military bases in Romania after the war, and to anchor the long-term presence of Soviet troops in Finland in the agreement. He proposed territorial and political changes that would permanently weaken Germany and its allies. Poland, in exchange for the return of eastern regions the USSR had annexed before the war (and which went to Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania), was to receive a greater portion of eastern Prussia—Stalin proposed East German land up to the Odra River be included. Romania was to obtain Transylvania, at that time controlled by Hungary. He also proposed to encourage neutrality on Turkey's part by promising it the Dodecanese islands and part of Bulgaria. (Turkey's attitude later prompted him to withdraw this proposal.) And finally, he was reluctant to restore the sovereignty of France, conditioning this upon the removal of the government of Philippe Pétain and the creation of a democratic system was formed the left unspecified.²⁸⁰

Thus, at the very outset of the war, Stalin already had clear ideas about some aspects of the post-war situation. He counted on a rapid turnaround in the war, with the United States and Britain transferring the focus of their operations to

277 Roberts G.: *Stalin's War: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953*, Yale Univ. Press 2008, p. 97; also Utkin A., *Vtoraya mirovaya vojna*, pp. 133–134.

278 See Barsenkov/Vdovin, *Istoriya SSSR*, pp. 326–327; Cited according to Pozdneveva L. V.: *Geopoliticheskaya diplomatiya*, in: *Soyuzniki v vojne 1941–1945*, eds. Chubaryan A. O., Kimball W. F., Reynolds D., Moscow, Nauka, 1995, p. 371.

279 For information on the development of American politics in relation to the USSR see Pechatnov V. O. (*Stalin, Roosevelt, Truman: SSSR i SSA v 1940-ch gg.* Moscow, Terra, 2006), whose conclusions we have taken into account.

280 Rzheshesvsky O. A., *Stalin i Čerčil'*, pp. 31–54 (dok. 4–9), The USA and Britain also expressed reluctance on the France issue.

France (the second front), and a significant contribution by the USSR to the European war. But from the start of negotiations, the countries involved held vastly different positions. Britain did not want to exceed to the Soviet request for its 1941 borders to be reinstated. A key sticking point was Poland's eastern border. The USSR, Britain, and the United States were all aware that the Polish would not accept the 1941 Soviet border, and Stalin was unwilling to withdraw from the 'Curzon Line' proposed by Britain in 1920 as the ethnic border of Poland.²⁸¹ Compromise solutions were difficult to come by, not only because of Poland's logically negative attitude, but also because Britain was taking over the roles France had played in Eastern Europe during the interwar period.²⁸²

The tense negotiations between the USSR and Britain continued in May and June 1942 with Molotov's visit to Britain and then the USA. The Red Army had just been soundly defeated in the Crimea and at Kharkov, and the Germans were getting ready to set out on their counteroffensive targeting Stalingrad. Soviet political leaders signed on to an agreement with Britain and the USA that prioritized the creation of a second front in the West. In London, Molotov was only able to conclude a British-Soviet Alliance Agreement by setting aside the issue of the Soviet Union's post-war borders. The second front was to be created in 1942 by British and American forces landing in the north and northwest of France.²⁸³ Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden express their doubts about the potential for its implementation, but did not outright reject the plan. Roosevelt showed interest in landing troops during his negotiations with Molotov, who upped his demands and warned that the Soviet front was in danger of collapsing. The opening of a second front in France in 1942 was thus agreed with the USA. In early April of that year, Roosevelt wrote to Churchill: 'Both your people and my people require a front be established to reduce the pressure on the Russians, and these people are wise enough to understand that today, the Russians are killing more Germans and destroying more German armaments than you and

281 See Paczkowski A., *Pół stoletia dějin Polska 1939–1989* (from Polish: *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989*), Prague Academia, 2000, pp. 43–45 and 62–63.

282 This was clearly expressed negotiations by Winston Churchill in Moscow 9–18 November 1944 that we note below.

283 The agreement was concluded for 20 years, i.e. it presumed collaboration after the war. Rzheshesky O. A., Stalin i Chercil': doc. 73 and 76, pp. 190–193 and 196–200; Cavlococressi P. / Wint B., *Total war: Causes and Courses of the Second World War*, Pelican Books 1974, pp. 333–334; *Istoriya Rossii XX vek, 1939–2007*, ed. Zubov A. B. (Moscow, Astrel/AST, 2010, p. 68) indicates that Stalin told Molotov: "... *The issue of borders... we'll address by force*".

I together. Even if full success is not achieved, a great goal will be.²⁸⁴ Roosevelt assured Molotov that the USA would make 4 million soldiers and 600,000 sailors available, allowing the deployment of a significant number of troops in Western Europe.²⁸⁵ It was agreed that supplies for the armed forces, warfare materiel, aircraft, and food for the USSR should be significantly increased under the American Lend-Lease Policy.

It may thus seem that collaboration among the Allies had made great progress. But shortly after Molotov returned to Moscow, things changed. Winston Churchill left for Washington and, supported by some American generals, pushed through a proposal that the focus of war operations by the Western powers be shifted to North Africa and the Middle East, meaning the second front in Continental Europe was not created. The British and the Americans agreed to the amphibious landing operation code-named 'Torch', which was to change the balance of power on the African battlefield. In autumn of 1942, British troops headed by General Bernard L. Montgomery were able to push the Germans and the Italians out of Egypt. Shortly thereafter, American and British troops landed in French Morocco and Algeria and headed north towards Tunisia. The change in the situation on the ground in North Africa freed the Western Allies to shift their focus back to Europe, but when they did, the focus was not on France but on Italy, in an effort to force the fascists to surrender earlier rather than later.

We are not competent to assess the military aspects of these changes, but a landing in Sicily or on the Italian mainland could not replace an invasion in France. Such a landing would not attract great numbers of German forces who would have to be withdrawn from the East, easing the situation in the USSR.²⁸⁶ Over the long-term, it also did nothing for the positions of Britain and the USA in Continental Europe during the closing phase of the war. But the immediate consequences for the USSR were clear. After visiting Washington, Churchill travelled through Cairo before the end of April 1942 and continued on to Moscow, where he negotiated with Stalin and Molotov. His arguments seized upon the situation on the ground in North Africa and the fact that an invasion of France had not yet been adequately prepared. What was key, however, was that Britain and the USA had changed their invasion plans without notifying the Soviet leadership, and the change was not significant, since the German army was currently

284 Churchill W.S., *The Second World War*, Vol. IV, p. 321.

285 Rzheshvsky O. A., *Stalin i Cherkil'*, doc. 81–86, 89, 93, 109, 111; pp. 214–233, 234–240, 242–244, 261–263, 265–266.

286 According to Geller M. and Nekrich A (*Utopia u vlasti*, p. 452), up to 70% of the German armed forces were focused on the German-Soviet front.

marching toward Stalingrad, occupying Rostov and moving toward the Caucasus. In Moscow, Churchill did not meet with much understanding. Stalin warned that the change in plans would cause the Red Army and the common interests of the Allies great harm, but he had no choice but to accept the British and American decision.²⁸⁷ He was assured that the 'second front' would be created in 1943, and that the USSR would receive increased aid from its allies.

At that juncture, Stalin and Churchill's negotiations did not lead to open conflict. Both parties were aware of the potential consequences. In August 1942, Churchill reported to Roosevelt: "Stalin said lots of unpleasant things, particularly that we are afraid of fighting the Germans—and if we made war on them like the Russians do, we would find out it is not so bad."²⁸⁸ Stalin felt that he had right on his side; the unilateral decisions inspired by Churchill caused the invasion of France to be postponed by two years, and left the major burden of the European war squarely on the USSR. The ensuing losses amounted to millions of soldiers and civilians, and significant losses for the countries of Continental Europe, as well. Military operations in southern Europe were not successful enough to justify a change of invasion plans.²⁸⁹ The relationships between the allies now fell subject to another round of mutual distrust, which complicated subsequent agreements and their implementation.

It soon became clear that the change in invasion plans was not the only reason the dispute had arisen. In his message sent to Roosevelt from Moscow in summer of 1942, Churchill also said Stalin had reproached him that the Allies reportedly sent the USSR only 'the leftovers' that remained after satisfying 'their own needs.'²⁹⁰ Stalin personally informed Ivan M. Maisky, the Soviet ambassador to London, that Churchill's actions in Moscow made the general impression that Churchill was counting on the USSR being defeated, and that he would then make an agreement with 'Hitler's or Bruening's' Germany. Maisky attempted to disabuse Stalin of his suspicions, but to no effect. Stalin insisted, 'Churchill

287 G.v. Rauch G.v., *Geschichte der Sowjetunion*, pp. 393–394.

288 Rzheshesky O. A., *Stalin i Cherkhil'*, p. 364 (*Churchill–Roosevelt, 15.8.1942*); in detail Churchill W. S., *The Second World War, Vol. IV*, pp. 390–407. 476–502.

289 Calvocoressi P./Wint G., *Total war*, 338–331; Utkin A., *Vtoraya mirovaya voyna*, 360–361; see also Danchev A., *Strategia nepryamyh deystviy, in: Soyuzniki v voyne 1941–1945*, pp. 45 and 48–55.

290 *Istoria Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz*, Vol. 6, Moscow 1965, pp. 48, 62 and Roberts, G.: *Stalin's War*, p. 205, speak of the Western Allies covering approximately 10% of Soviet warfare needs in 1941–1945. *Istoria Rossii XX vek* (Zubov A. B.), pp. 69–71, indicates substantially higher figures.

succumbs easily to the influence of those who count on the defeat of the Soviet Union. The defeat of our country and compromise with Germany at the expense of the Soviet Union are the easiest way for the British to wage war against Germany.²⁹¹

We have no desire to assess which party was correct. But Churchill's interference in the Allied war strategy had serious consequences. Even before the end of 1942, the Soviet army had started a counteroffensive at Stalingrad. In March 1943, Stalin pointed out to Churchill that the Allies' obligation on the 'second front' that remains unmet had allowed the Germans to transfer thirty-six divisions to the eastern front. In parallel, William H. Standley, the American ambassador in Moscow, told American journalists that the Soviet government was concealing the scope of American aid. Roosevelt was forced to send his confidant Joseph Davies, the former ambassador to the USSR, to Moscow to determine how the conflict could be settled. Although the issue was not eliminated, Davies's mission contributed to improving the relationships between Stalin and Roosevelt.

Fresh messages arrived from the Allies making clear that they had once again changed their position on the obligations and postpone the opening of the second front to 1944. Meanwhile, up to 63% of the German army continued to be on the German-Soviet front.²⁹² This was accompanied by a warning from Churchill that Britain and the USA would suspend their shipments to the USSR, justifying this by saying preparations had to be made for an invasion of Sicily.²⁹³ Moscow interpreted these decisions as being tied to an effort to transfer the focus of Western operations to Italy and potentially to the Balkans. The changes had taken place with no prior consultation with Stalin, which inflamed his outrage even further: 'Your decision creates enormous difficulties for the USSR, which has been fighting against the major forces of Germany and its allies for two years intensively... I need not mention how difficult and negative an impression postponing the establishment of the second front will make in this country. It leaves our army, which has suffered so many losses, without the anticipated, substantial support of English and American troops.' When Churchill attempted to counter these sentiments, Stalin added: 'I must point out to you that this is about more

291 Rzheshhevsky, *Stalin i Cherkhil'*: pp. 376, 378, Stalin to Maisky, 28.10.1942.

292 Geller M. / Nekrich A., *Utopia u vlasti*, pp. 451–452; also Rauch G.; v., *Geschichte der Sowjetunion*, pp. 403–404.

293 *Perepiska Predsedatelya Sovieta Ministrov SSSR I. V. Stalina s Prezidentami SShA i Premier Ministrami Velikobritanii vo vremya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynie 1941–1945 gg.*, Moscow, 1986, doc. 162, 163, 164, 165, pp. 130–138.

than the disappointment of the Soviet army. It is also about the maintenance of trust with allies that has already been subject to severe tribulations.²⁹⁴

Such a heated argument obviously did nothing to calm the situation. To boot, in spring 1943, the relationships between the Soviet Union and its allies began to encounter new stumbling blocks. In mid-April, Radio Berlin broadcast information that the graves of thousands of Polish officers killed by Soviet security forces had been found at Katyn near Smolensk. Today, we know these murders had been carried out at the behest of the Soviet Politburo. This crime could not be explained away or excused, and for this reason, the Soviet government interpreted the information as an attempt by the Nazis to shift the blame for their own crime to the USSR, to cause a split in the anti-Hitler forces. The Polish exile government of Władysław Sikorski, however, did not reject the German accusations, and asked the International Red Cross to investigate. It was its right and duty to do so, and pressure came from the mood of a substantial segment of the Polish public, both émigrés and those at home. The request was not withdrawn even after pressure was brought by Churchill and Eden, who feared further damage to the relationship with the USSR.²⁹⁵ But for Stalin, the attitude of the Polish exile government served as a pretext to accuse it of aiding the Nazis. He severed his ties. His attitude became a tool which allowed the elimination of the Polish government in exile from further negotiations, thereby undermining Polish resistance to the change in the Polish-Soviet borders.²⁹⁶

Tehran

The conflict between allies that had originally revolved around the time and place of invasion now took on a new dimension: the post-war organization of Europe started to play a key role. After the victories at Stalingrad and Kursk, not only did the Soviets gain confidence, they realized they could bring much greater pressure to bear on their allies than before. Churchill placed British interests first, and, as we have noted, kept Stalin in the dark and, to some extent, the USA, as well. This went against the interests of the Western allies. Churchill preferred to transfer the focus of British and American war operations to Italy

294 *Perepiska Predsedatelya Sovieta Ministrov SSSR*, Vol. 1, pp. 131 and 135–139; Vol. II., pp. 66–68; for more detail, see Utkin A., *Vtoraya mirovaya vojna*, pp. 646–647.

295 *Perepiska Predsedatelya Sovieta Ministrov SSSR* Vol. 1, pp. 121–124.

296 See the message from Stalin to Churchill dated 4.5.1943, *Perepiska Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR*, Vol. 1, pp. 126–127 and 119–124; cf. Paczkowski A., *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989*, pp. 97–103.

in the Balkans, something which might have worked but only if the USSR was incapacitated, incapable of handling the war on its own.

The negative aspects of Churchill's approach became clear immediately after Stalingrad. British politicians proved too rigid to modify their notions, and in so doing, hogtied the USA, as well. As a result, the relationships between the Western Allies and the USSR were on the edge of conflict by mid-1943. In a message sent to Roosevelt, with a copy to Churchill, Stalin stated that the Soviet government would not sign on to the decision to postpone the invasion of France made 'without its participation and an effort to jointly resolve this serious issue.' He added that the decision 'would have serious consequences for the further course of the war.'²⁹⁷

This preliminary history of the later conferences among the 'Big Three' is worthy of our attention. The idea behind organizing these conferences was not born simply of the 'need to deepen mutual collaboration'. From the USSR's standpoint, the British and American decision-making process was discriminatory, and as such, endangered the unity of the alliance. Furthermore, the Western Allies' war strategy had not accommodated itself quickly enough to the turn the war in the East had taken, a mistake which remained uncorrected until mid-1944. In fact, this error substantially reinforced the USSR's gains from its victory at Stalingrad and Kursk, allowing Soviet soldiers to cross the Polish and Romanian borders in early 1944 and dominate the war in Eastern and Central Europe and in the Balkans. An obvious question is whether it was within the capacity of Britain and the USA to implement the war strategy that had been considered by Roosevelt in 1942. But the truth is that Britain's decisions left to the military initiative in Europe de facto up to Stalin, and the Western Allies had no choice but to adapt.

Roosevelt soon became aware that the situation had changed and, sensing the threat it posed, began to try to eliminate the tension in the relationship with the USSR. Davies's visit to Moscow presented the opportunity to do so. When he returned to the USA, Davies brought Stalin's consent for organizing a meeting involving him, Roosevelt and 'potentially' Churchill.²⁹⁸ But Churchill's strategy had already sunk in. Stalin realized the principle behind it was to prefer set solutions to negotiations and that the changing course of the war and the geographic distribution of combatants would allow the USSR follow this prescription much more effectively than its Western partners. His realization was

297 *Perepiska Predsedatelya Sovieta Ministrov SSSR*, Vol. II, doc. pp. 92, 69–70 (cit. 70), a copy was sent to Churchill simultaneously Calvocoressi; P./Wint G., *Total War*, pp. 333–342; Reynolds D. etc.: *Soyuzniki, protivniki, potomki*, in: *Soyuzniki v vojne 1941–1945*, pp. 423–424.

298 *Perepiska Predsedatelya Sovieta Ministrov SSSR* Vol. II, pp. 76–77.

borne out in late September and early October 1943 by events in Italy. Italy's exit from the war was arranged by the Western Allies without consulting the USSR. During this episode, Stalin sent a message to Roosevelt and Churchill stating that in the future, he was not willing to simply accept the decision of his partners, and proposed that a political mission be created to prepare negotiations with German satellites now willing to exit the war. The proposal did not solve the problem, but it did serve as a warning that Stalin had taken notice of the behaviour of his allies and was determined to avail himself of the same tactics.²⁹⁹

The mistakes made by Western political leaders thus likely became a point of focus in Washington. The USSR's Western allies had to consider transferring their European operations, even if belatedly, to France, and to improve their positions in any potential peace talks. The initiatives taken by Roosevelt, whose own political concept clearly differed from that of Churchill, were decisive. To insist on moving from Italy to the Balkans, or across the Alps to Vienna, meant risking conflict with the USSR as well as concentrating great numbers of combatants along the front where a decisive victory was difficult to procure.³⁰⁰ Stalin was able to leverage these dilemmas faced by Western leaders to put through to important proposals: to call a meeting of the Big Three, and a conference of ministers of foreign affairs to take place prior to that meeting and set the agenda. The conference was to take place in Moscow, and Soviet diplomacy thus obtained a healthy opportunity to influence the negotiations of the Big Three.³⁰¹

The first meeting of the Big Three—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—took place in Tehran in late November and early December 1943 and was, as might be anticipated, importantly influenced by Soviet input and proposals, which even influence the choice of Tehran as the location for the gathering. The city suited Stalin who, as chief commander of the Soviet armed forces, reportedly wished to ensure the opportunity for permanent contact with his headquarters. Roosevelt, in spite of his physical handicap (he was wheelchair-bound), and Churchill

299 *Perepiska Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR*, Vol. II, doc. 104, p. 83; *SSSR i germanskiy vorpos 1941–1949: Documents AVP RF*, Ed. Kynin G. P. Laufer J., Moscow, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 674, reference to a memorandum issued by the USA embassy in Moscow dated 24.9.1943 and response from NKID USSR dated 16.10.1943.

300 Contradictions continued also in 1944 and generated tension in the relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt, see *Churchill W. S., The Second World war*, Vol. VI, pp. 354–356.

301 *Perepiska Predsedatelya Sovieta Ministrov SSSR*, Vol. II, doc. 111, 89–90; Roberts, *The Stalin's War*, 134.

travelled to a remote location lacking comfort and remote from their own environments. Given the safety and comfort issues, it was significant that Roosevelt accepted the Soviets' offer to stay on the grounds of Soviet Embassy—a gesture of goodwill, but one that undoubtedly gave Stalin an advantage.

Stalin's motivation for calling a meeting of the Big Three was the increased tension in the relationship between the USSR and its Western allies. Roosevelt came motivated to seek commonality for the same reason. But this was hardly an expression of Roosevelt's naïveté. The intensive development of nuclear weapons was hidden from Stalin in accordance with agreements between Roosevelt and Churchill. But the meeting in Tehran nevertheless took place in an atmosphere of unusual willingness that was lacking at both prior and subsequent negotiations between the Allies. This was emphasized in a communiqué from the meeting: 'We arrived here full of hope and determination, we leave as true friends in spirit and intention...'³⁰²

There is no need to examine all aspects of the Tehran conference. Most researchers today agree that the conference of foreign ministers in Moscow and the Tehran meeting initiated an eighteen month period of positive collaboration among the allies.³⁰³ These negotiations were important to the USSR because they were accompanied by a careful study of standpoints taken by Western statesmen, diplomats, and journalists. Soviet diplomacy hence came to these negotiations with much greater knowledge of Western views than ever before.³⁰⁴

The chief outcome of the meeting was an agreement that in spring 1944, the Western armies would land in north-western France as part of Operation Overlord. This would tie up significant numbers of German troops and immediately put German territory under threat. Other significant results of the meeting were agreement on the unconditional surrender of Germany, the opening of the post-war German border question, and the transfer of the German population. Stalin agreed with Roosevelt that an international organization should be established to replace the League of Nations. He also agreed with the creation of what later became the Security Council and proposed that it operate on the basis of unanimity

302 *Teheran, Jalta, Potsdam: Die sowjetischen Protokolle von den Kriegsderonferenzen der „Grossen Drei“*, hrsg. A. Fischer, Köln, Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985., pp. 89–90.

303 By this we mean the negotiation of peace agreements with “satellites” of Nazi Germany – Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, Hungary and Romania. See Ort A., *Evropa 20. století*, p. 133.

304 *SSSR i germanski vopros, 22 iunya 1941 g.–8 maja 1945 g.*, Vol. 1, (ed.) Kynin G. P. and Laufer J., Moscow, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia, 1996, pp. 252–312.

and joint responsibility by four superpowers—the USA, Great Britain, the USSR, and China—in the interests of maintaining peace and peacefully resolving international conflicts.³⁰⁵ This revealed an effort to prevent any future tensions and to create a mechanism that would involve the USSR in the system of international organizations. It is also important to note that the Soviet diplomatic service, in particular Maxim Litvinov, carefully noted that the Western Allies did not include France in the leading body of the new UN. Also noted were Churchill's statements of the 'uneven share... of the superpowers in resolving issues,' prompting a corresponding change to the interpretation of the British-Soviet agreement of May 1942: 'If a border of Great Britain runs along the Rhine, it may be stated with certainty that the USSR's border runs along the Odra River, that is, along the newly established western Polish border, and this is true even if it has not been expressed explicitly. The Soviet diplomatic service also carefully noted that the interpretation saw only two of the four superpowers, Britain and the USSR, as European, and that they were to be the ones to ensure the safety of Europe.³⁰⁶ Ivan Maisky, another leading Soviet diplomat of whom we have spoken before, elaborated this idea by claiming that it was advantageous for the USSR to maintain a two-superpower situation in Europe. This claim relied on the fact that the influence of Britain would diminish in favour of the USA and that Britain, like France, would suffer from future population reductions.

These ideas held by Litvinov and Maisky spoke to the fact that the challenge to France's role was not simply a reflection of the current situation. A contributing factor was likely the existence of the Vichy 'state' and the reluctance of the Western allies, particularly the USA, to accept General Charles de Gaulle as the representative of a new France. Not giving France a role to play after the war was a substantial error by both the USSR and the Western superpowers, one which was remedied only later. A superpower role for friends proved essential if the Western Allies were to ensure the stability of the Western European region and anchor the western borders of post-war Germany.³⁰⁷ In the end, the USA and Britain decided to support France's role in Europe, allocating it an occupation

305 China as the fourth member of the "Big Three" was proposed by Roosevelt, who probably wanted stability in the Far East after the defeat of Japan.

306 *SSSR i germanskij vopros*, Vol. 1, pp. 210 and 283.

307 The opinion Soviet diplomats had of France as the junior partner of the victorious superpowers did not entirely conform to Stalin's political thinking: he spoke of the administration of European issues by a trio including the USA, Britain and the USSR, plus another state—clearly meaning France. See *SSSR i germanski vopros*, Vol. 1, pp. 338–339; also *Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam*, ed. Fischer A., 46.

zone in Germany and Berlin, and pushing through French membership in the Allied Council that administered occupied Germany. The Soviet Union, for its part, established relationships with General Charles de Gaulle and recognized the role of France in Europe, complicating the future creation of a unified Western block.

However, issues of post-war organization, especially those touching on the Asian region, were not entirely resolved in Tehran. Defeating Japan did not play the role people thought it did in the discussions. Japan's defeat came with the dropping of nuclear bombs by the Americans on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, something from which Japan has still not recovered as a political and military superpower. The unilateral occupation of Japan by the Americans and the conclusion of a peace agreement in a meeting at which the USSR and, in the end, the People's Republic of China were missing made Japan's international position significantly different to that of Germany. In the long run, this proved not to be of benefit of the settlement in the Far East.

The post-war role played by China, as the victorious superpower in Asia, was not stable over the long term either. No matter the reasons, it was impossible to prevent the subsequent development of the Chinese civil war. Chang Kai-shek's regime proved to be too weak to defend its role, despite the support of the United States and Britain.

Stalin's promise to get involved in a war with Japan after the end of the European war thus had substantial meaning for developments in Asia.³⁰⁸ His goal, though, was to reinforce the USSR's position in the Far East, to get established in the north of China, and to redeem the losses the Russians had suffered there during the Russian-Japanese war in 1905 and later, as the USSR, in the 1920s. On the one hand, Stalin accepted Chang Kai-shek as a legitimate representative of China, but he was not pleased at the prospect of turning the 'Big Three' into a 'Big Four' or 'Big Five', thereby weakening the USSR's weight.³⁰⁹ But Chang Kai-shek was not the only reason that China was not allowed to play the role of superpower. The Communists had won the civil war in autumn 1949 and it was this that prompted the USA and Western states to deny China acceptance as a legitimate superpower for decades. Taiwan remained in the UN as representative of China, but naturally could not pretend to the role of a superpower.

308 *Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam*, hrsg. A. Fischer, 68–69 and 196. Agreement on the entry of the USSR into the war in the Far East was made only in Yalta but Stalin had clearly revealed his intentions in Tehran.

309 *Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam*, hrsg. A. Fischer, 45–48; Utkin, *Vtoraya mirovaya voyna*, pp. 756–757.