

CHAPTER 4

THE GRAND ALLIANCE

The Grand Alliance was born on the very day Hitler's forces attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. It would last until February 1946, when Stalin re-established a policy of confrontation with the West. During these four and a half years, the Allies defeated Hitler-Germany, divided Germany in four occupation zones and brought its surviving leaders to trial before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal. Through a series of Summit meetings, primarily between U.S. President Roosevelt (Truman in Potsdam), British Prime-Minister Churchill (Attlee second part in Potsdam), and Soviet leader Stalin, their political agreements laid the basis for the post-war "order of Yalta" that would last until 1989. They did so in disregard of a number of agreements to which they had been a party and in open violation of the principles on which their alliance had been based in 1941. At the same time, and primarily due to the United States, they also laid the basis for the institution of the United Nations and its Specialised Agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the renewed International Labour Organisation.

The formation of the Grand Alliance, writes Norman Davies:

"was every bit as shocking as that of the Nazi-Soviet partnership two years earlier. Every principle of the Anglo-Saxon democracies was contradicted by the Soviet system. Nor was it just a matter of forgetting Stalin's past crimes. The Western leaders had to close their minds to the fact that Stalin continued to kill perhaps a million of his own people every year throughout the war. But Stalin was weak and Hitler was strong, Stalin had to be helped. By Stalin's standards, the Western democracies were every bit as nau-

seating and 'anti-socialist' as the Führer. But with the Wehrmacht at the gates of Moscow, the helping hand of the West had to be accepted; ideological niceties did not enter the reckoning. Though the anti-Nazi alliance was to be wrapped in the verbiage of freedom, democracy, and justice, the Big Three were bound together by cynical convenience."¹

Were the Big Three indeed bound by cynical advantage? Or were they only united in the war-aim to defeat Germany, while disagreeing on the shape of a post-war world order?

The initiative for the Grand Alliance, clearly, came from Winston Churchill. On the night of the German attack, he said:

"The Nazi regime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism. It is devoid of all theme and principle except appetite and racial domination. It excels all forms of human wickedness in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression. No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding. The past, with its crimes, its follies, and its tragedies, flashes away. I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which their fathers have tilled from time immemorial. (...) Any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe. (...) It follows therefore that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people. (...) [Hitler] wishes to destroy the Russian power because he hopes that if he succeeds in this he will be able to bring back the main strength of his Army and Air Force from the East and hurl it upon this Island, which he know he must conquer or suffer the penalty of his crimes. His invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles. (...) The Russian danger is therefore our danger, and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe."²

¹ *Europe. A History*, PIMLICO, 1997, p. 1028.

² Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*.vol III, *The Grans Alliance*, Cassell & Co., 1950, p. 331-333.

In reply to a cable of 15 June from Churchill, the American Ambassador brought President Roosevelt's message on 21 June in which Roosevelt promised, that if the Germans struck at Russia he would immediately support publicly "any announcement that the Prime Minister might make welcoming Russia as an ally."³

The alliance was offered to Russia at a time, the United States still was a non-belligerent. The formal establishment of the alliance of the "United Nations" only followed on 1 January 1942 after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and Hitler's declaration of war on the United States made America an ally in the war.

One can understand Churchill's offer. After the occupation of Western Europe and the defeat of France, Britain was all alone in coping with the German air raids and the threat of a German invasion. The opening of a second front in the East relieved the pressure. The Soviet Union needed support to resist in order to avoid the nightmare (of 1918) of a separate German-Soviet peace, which would enable the victorious German forces to apply all their power against the British isles. This latter nightmare was not completely unfounded, given the devious nature of the Soviet regime, Stalin's hostility to Western interest and the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact.⁴ Against the mortal danger of Nazi-Germany, Britain was in no position to refuse an alliance. One might even understand, why joint resistance required Britain – at least for the time being – to desist from openly challenge the objectives for which Stalin would fight the war.

From a Western – British and American – perspective, the Soviet reactions were not immediately unpromising. On 30 July 1941 the Soviet Government recognised the Polish Government in exile and concluded a treaty with them, recognizing that the treaties of 1939 with Germany had lost their validity as to territorial changes in Poland.⁵ Shortly thereafter, President Roosevelt

³ *Ibid*, p. 330.

⁴ Text in document I.2.12.

⁵ Document I.4.1.

and Prime Minister Churchill issued the Declaration of Principles "For a better future world" known as the Atlantic Charter. The day thereafter they sent a joint message of assistance to the Soviet Union.⁶

By virtue of the Declaration of the United Nations on 1 January 1942, the Soviet Union acceded to the Atlantic Charter. By virtue of article 5 of the British-Soviet Twenty-Year Mutual Assistance Agreement of 26 May 1942, the Soviet Union committed itself to act in accordance with the two principles of not seeking territorial aggrandisement for themselves and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.⁷

On the assumption that Stalin would honour these principles, the Allies continued their talks in 1943 in Moscow and Teheran.⁸ In Moscow the Big Three and China adopted a Declaration on General Security in which they recognised the necessity of establishing a general international organisation for the maintenance of international peace and security. They also expressed their willingness to confer and cooperate towards an agreement with respect to the regulation of armaments in the post-war period. Prior to the Teheran Conference of the Big Three, Roosevelt and Churchill met separately with Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo to discuss the Far East. In Teheran, the Big Three discussed European issues, but no agreement was reached on Russia's and Poland's western frontiers, though Churchill agreed to the Curzon line as a basis and to the acquisition by Poland of German territory east of the Oder river. Roosevelt initiated a discussion on the establishment of a post-war international organisation.

Despite these commitments, Stalin nevertheless had made clear at an early date that his post-war territorial objectives had not changed, compared to the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact and the Soviet note to Germany of 25 November 1940.⁹ This lat-

⁶ Documents I.4.2 and I.4.3.

⁷ Documents I.4.4 and I.4.5.

⁸ Texts in documents I.4.8 and I.4.9.

⁹ Chapter 2 *supra* and document I.2.17.

ter document and the secret annexes were unknown to Roosevelt and Churchill at the time.

Once America had entered the war as a full member of the Grand Alliance and the big three began their high level talks on the post-war order, one might have expected that at least some of Stalin's territorial objectives would be challenged. Instead of this, Roosevelt and his administration opted for accommodation and – as Kissinger wrote – for:

"the re-invention of Stalin, organizer of purges and recent collaborator of Hitler, into 'Uncle Joe', the paragon of moderation, (...) surely the ultimate triumph of hope over experience. (...) They [the American people] preferred to see Stalin as an avuncular friend rather than as a totalitarian dictator."¹⁰

One can ascribe this attitude – as George Kennan did¹¹ – to ignorance about the nature of the communist system or fatal misjudgement. The underlying fact, however, is that the Western democracies in war were incapable of doing otherwise. They could not but assume (as Churchill did when he offered alliance) that Russia had joined "the cause of free men and free peoples" and that Stalin's adhesion to the principles of the Atlantic Charter was genuine. The reality of totalitarian rule was beyond their comprehension, whether in the Soviet Union or in Germany.

It was the mixture of strategic necessity and democratic incomprehension, by which the creation and the evolution of the Grand Alliance became such a shocking and profoundly disturbing episode in the history of Western cooperation.

TERRIBLE, TOTALITARIAN SECRETS

Still, as must be emphasised, the presumed ignorance and democratic incomprehension about the nature of the communist system, are not sufficient an explanation for the policies of Roosevelt and Churchill. Both Hitler and Stalin were masters in the

¹⁰ *Diplomacy, op.cit.*, p. 412.

¹¹ *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin, op.cit.*

totalitarian practice of deliberate concealment and deception. Some of the most important, criminal acts they had committed – jointly or separately – were not known to Roosevelt and Churchill at the time of their meetings with Stalin. At least five of their terrible secrets, that determined the outcome of the war, must be briefly mentioned.

The first – joint – secret consisted of the secret supplementary protocols to the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact and the later Boundary and Friendship Treaty of 28 September 1939, and the Soviet Note of 25 November 1940. The annexation of the Baltic States and the definitive settlement of the problems arising from the collapse of the Polish State were the outcome of their agreement to divide East and Central Europe among them in “their respective spheres of influence.” It was their joint objective and Stalin’s objective after June 1941 to annex the territories in their spheres of influence and so end the sovereignty and independence of the states, created by the peace-treaties after the First World War. The Western Allies only learned about those secret agreements after the end of the war and thus did not understand the true nature of Stalin’s territorial objectives.

The second – joint – secret was their policy aimed at the liquidation of the Polish State by the extermination of their leading politicians, intellectuals and officers. The policy was ruthlessly executed and, between September 1939 and June 1941, in consultation if not in cooperation between the German SS and the Soviet NKVD. For both Hitler and Stalin, Poland was to disappear from the map of Europe and its territory had to be cleansed of Polish citizens. The extent of their cooperation is still unknown today. Truman and Churchill/Attlee did not know and probably could not understand that their agreement to “an orderly transfer of populations” at the Potsdam Conference was seen by Stalin as an authorisation to continue that policy against the Polish nation.

The third – separate Soviet – secret was the massacre of Polish officers in the forest of Katyn. This secret was discovered by German forces in 1943 and made public – no doubt a propaganda effort to divide the Grand Alliance.

Following the establishment of diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1941, the Polish Government had in vain asked Moscow for information about the fate of its disappeared officers. After the discovery, the Polish Government associated itself with the German request for an investigation by the International Red Cross. The Western Allies reacted furiously, the Soviet Union violently. Moscow broke off relations with the Polish Government in exile and would combat it with every means, including the setting up of the Lublin Committee, to be the nucleus of a subservient communist Polish government. The Katyn massacre was flatly denied by Moscow.

In post-war communist Poland it was a forbidden subject and would remain so until 1987. The truth about Katyn was admitted only by Soviet President Gorbachev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who released the document ordering the massacre.¹² As explained by Andrzej Paczkowski in his contribution on "Poland, enemy-nation" to the Black Book of Communism, Soviet policy against Poland continued well into the post-war period.¹³ In Yalta and Potsdam the Western Allies accepted Poland's Eastern border imposed by Stalin.¹⁴ Between Yalta and Potsdam, they tried in vain to obtain Soviet cooperation in the implementation of the agreements reached at Yalta on a representative Polish government and free elections. Contrary to their agreement to leave the determination of Poland's western border to the future peace conference, Stalin proceeded unilaterally to transfer

¹² Stalin's order of 5 March 1940 is reprinted as document I.4.6.

¹³ Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panne, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, Jean-Louis Margolin, *Le livre noir du communisme. Crimes, terreur, répression*, Laffont, 1997.

¹⁴ Texts of the reports of the two conferences can be found in documents I.4.11 and I.4.12.

control over the German territories East of the Oder- Neisse line to the Polish communist government.

The fourth – separate Soviet – secret concerns the Warsaw uprising and the destruction of the City by special German *Vernichtungskommandos* thereafter. The uprising began on 1 August 1944, when the Soviet armies were approaching Warsaw. It was crushed by the Nazi's and the last surviving freedom fighters surrendered on 2 October. Thereafter the Nazi's were given more than three months to systematically destroy the city – until Polish units under Soviet command on 17 January 1945 were allowed to enter the abandoned ruins. In the sixth volume of his *Second World War Memories*, Churchill describes his abortive attempts with Stalin to support the uprising. His account ends with the surrender of the fighters and offers no clue on the three months, when Soviet forces passively watched the total destruction of Warsaw. According to Alan Bullock:

“in the perspective of the war, the suppression of the Warsaw rising and the denial of the city to the Russians for three more months represented one of the last German successes. In the slightly longer perspective of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which had divided Poland between Germans and Russians, it represented the final act in their parallel policies of destroying the existing leadership of the Polish nation. In the much longer perspective of the post-war settlement it represented a decisive victory for Stalin.”¹⁵

The Soviet collusion with Hitler was, again, a forbidden subject in communist Poland. Even today, Soviet policy towards the Warsaw uprising remains a secret.

The last – separate German – secret to be mentioned here, concerns the Wannsee Protocol of 20 January 1942, the German decision for the *Endlösung*, the *Shoah* of the European Jews.¹⁶ This terrible secret was not known to the Allies until after the War,

¹⁵ *Hitler and Stalin. Parallel Lives*, Fontana Press, 1993, p. 925.

¹⁶ Document I.4.7.

although information on the fate of the Jews was known to them from early 1942. It reached them by various channels, such as newspaper articles, intelligence reports and embassies of the neutral powers. The first authentic and detailed news, writes Laqueur,

"about the 'final solution' came from inside Poland. Hitler had decided to make that country the slaughterhouse of Europe and the Polish sources of information were, therefore, more important than all others."¹⁷

The Polish Government in Exile in London had direct contact with the Polish underground and the Jewish Labour Bund and communicated the news it received to the Allied governments. The most poignant example of such information is the appeal made in May 1942 urging the Polish Government in Exile to take immediate action.¹⁸

According to Walter Laqueur the fate of the Jews was neither a priority concern for the Allies, nor did they believe in the correctness of the information.

Their incomplete knowledge about the five totalitarian secrets could only strengthen their determination to unite all available forces to defeat Hitler. To this end, criticism on Stalin had to be muted, as his full cooperation was required. Negotiations on a post-war settlement – which Roosevelt and Churchill knew would be extremely difficult – had to wait. When they met at Yalta, the Red Army already occupied most of the territories Stalin had claimed at the time of his alliance with Hitler and during the discussion with his new Western Allies after June 1941.

¹⁷ *The Terrible Secret. Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's 'Final Solution'*, Little Brown & Company, 1980.

¹⁸ Ronnie S. Landau, *Studying the Holocaust. Issues, Readings and Documents*, Routledge, 1998, p. 75.

YALTA AND POTSDAM

At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill had decided that the only terms "on which we shall deal with an Axis government or any Axis factions" were "Unconditional Surrender." As a consequence, the war continued until the total defeat of the German forces and the complete breakdown of German government. On 7 and 8 May 1945, the German High Command surrendered unconditionally to the Supreme Allied Commander and the Soviet High Command. Pursuant to the Declaration signed on 5 June 1945 in Berlin by the military commanders of the American, Soviet, British and French armies, the Allied Powers assumed supreme authority over Germany.

At the Conferences of Yalta and Potsdam, the heads of government of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union discussed and reached agreement on their policies with respect to Europe's post-war order.¹⁹ Among the agreements reached, the following subjects are of primary importance.

At Yalta agreement was reached on the convening of a United Nations Conference on the proposed world organisation. The conference met on 25 April 1945 in San Francisco and agreed on 26 June 1945 on the Charter of the United Nations Organisation. The Charter entered into force a few months later on 24 October 1945.

At Potsdam a Council of Foreign Ministers was established to do the necessary preparatory work for the peace settlements. Among its immediate important tasks was the drawing up of peace treaties with Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland, and proposals for the settlement of outstanding territorial questions. The peace treaties were concluded in 1947.

On 4 July 1945 representatives of the four Allied governments in the European Advisory Commission in London reached agreement on the control machinery to be established in Austria. Aus-

¹⁹ The two documents can be found under numbers I.4.11 and I.4.12.

tria and Vienna were divided into four occupation zones, as had been agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference. In contrast to Germany, the Austrian government continued to function, although the Four Occupying Powers could veto any new legislation, if they unanimously agreed to do so. The agreement of 28 June 1946 extended the authority of the Austrian government. The occupation lasted much longer than anticipated. It only came to an end on 25 October 1955 after the Austrian State Treaty of 15 May 1955 restored full sovereignty to the country. The Austrian situation had been unique in Europe. As a result of the *Anschluss* in 1938, it never has been clear whether Austria had been a victim or a collaborator of Nazi-Germany. The Allies were ambiguous on the matter.²⁰ They did not envisage a peace treaty with Austria as with Hungary, but a state treaty; at the same time its conclusion would have to wait the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. The thaw following Stalin's death in 1953 finally led to the State Treaty of 1955.

Germany was to be dismembered, disarmed and demilitarised. It was to be carved up in four occupation zones, in which supreme authority was to be exercised by the respective commanders in chief, and also jointly, in the Military Control Council for matters affecting Germany as a whole. The German leaders were to be tried in a special war crimes tribunal. The Nürnberg War Tribunal was created by agreement of 8 August 1945. According to the principles formulated at Potsdam, there should be uniformity of treatment of the German population and treatment of Germany as a single economic unit. The principal task of the occupation regime would be to eradicate the traces of Nazism, re-educate the population and prepare Germany for the eventual reconstruction of German political life on a democratic basis. Germany was to be subjected to extensive reparations, mainly to the Soviet Union.

²⁰ Compare the paragraphs on Austria in document I.4.9 (Moscow Declaration) with document I.4.12 (Potsdam Conference).

At Potsdam, the three governments also agreed to “an orderly transfer of German populations.” This agreement, in fact, concealed a massive operation of “ethnic cleansing,” masterminded by Stalin and already in full progress at the time of the Potsdam meeting. More than 20 million people were expelled from their homes, villages and towns. Most of them were Germans – women, children and elderly people – expelled from Königsberg, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia. Among the expelled were also Poles and Ukrainians, forced to move to the “right” side of the Polish Eastern border imposed by Stalin, and Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs and Rumanians who were driven to the areas from which Germans had been expelled.

No agreement could be reached in Yalta and Potsdam on the future government and the future borders of Poland – ally and major victim of German and Soviet aggression. The “agreements” reached were no more than a face-saving device for Roosevelt, Truman, Churchill and Attlee for conceding to Stalin that Poland would henceforward be a communist country; its Eastern frontiers would approximately follow the lines established by the 1939 Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact whereas its Western borders were moved to the Oder-Neisse.

The Conferences at Yalta and Potsdam were no peace-conferences. Their conclusions were declarations of policy and of political intentions. They were no legally binding instruments nor were any of the other United Nations consulted on their terms. They concealed fundamental disagreements between the two Western powers and their Soviet ally. Still, the “order of Yalta” and Potsdam would determine the East-West struggle over the future of Europe for many years to come. Its heritage of immutable, imposed borders is still left untouched.²¹

²¹ See this author's *The Illusions of Détente*, Chapter 8, From Détente to Cooperation? WLP 2009; volume 2 in the present series Footprints of the Twentieth Century,

POST-WAR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The continuing disagreements between Stalin and his Western Allies over Poland after Yalta were the source of differing ideas in Washington and London on how to deal with the Soviet government. Churchill sought means to restrain the Soviet policies of territorial expansion. Roosevelt and Truman attached less importance to these territorial issues, and they were primarily interested in the successful conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organisation, scheduled to meet in San Francisco. Planning for post-war cooperation had received the highest priority in Washington. Already in 1944, agreement had been reached in Bretton Woods on the creation of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and on a renewal of the International Labour Organisation.²² At the same time, representatives of the big three and China at Dumbarton Oaks had drafted the proposals for a General Security Organisation. The principal disagreement with the Soviet Union over the veto power had been settled at Yalta.

Drawing the lessons from the League of Nations experience, U.S. planning for post-war international cooperation emphasised the contribution of economic and monetary cooperation to international peace and security. The new general security organisation was to be given the power to enforce peace – President Roosevelt's idea of the Four Policemen. The idea found its way in the creation of the United Nations Security Council with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security; a responsibility to be exercised by the five permanent members, each with the power of veto. Agreement on the new organisation should be achieved prior to and separate from an eventual peace treaty. For Roosevelt and Truman patience over the territorial issues was deemed necessary to assure Soviet participation in the San Francisco Conference and the creation of the United Nations. The UN Charter was signed on 26 June

²² See document I.4.10.

1945 and approved by the U.S. Senate before President Truman went to Potsdam. What was happening in the meantime in the countries “liberated” or occupied by the Red Army, did not augur well for post-war cooperation.

As Russell writes:

“Despite all appeals, the Soviet Union continued creating exactly the kind of world the United States opposed. Rather than meet it with the policy of resistance urged by Forrester, Truman tried the policy of persuasion a while longer. ‘The world cannot afford to let the cooperative spirit of the Allies in this war disintegrate,’ he said in late October. ‘The world simply cannot allow this to happen. (...) It was a common danger which united us before victory. Let it be a common hope which continues to draw us together in the years to come.’ Although advocating universal training and the maintenance of adequate military strength to support lasting peace, Truman went no further than to declare that, in carrying out the ‘fundamental principles of righteousness and justice’ underlying American foreign policy, ‘we shall adhere to what we believe to be right; and we shall not give our approval to any compromise with evil’.”²³

In his “election” Address on 9 February 1946 Stalin re-affirmed his hostility to the West by ascribing in true communist fashion that the war had been caused not by Hitler but by the workings of the capitalist system. It signalled the end of the Grand Alliance and the beginning of the Cold War. Peace-enforcement by the Four Policemen (now the five permanent members in the Security Council) would prove to be an illusion. The same month, George Kennan sent his Long Telegram from Moscow.²⁴ Shortly thereafter, Winston Churchill gave his famous Fulton Speech on the Iron Curtain.²⁵

²³ Ruth B. Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter. The Role of the United States 1940-1945*, Brookings Institution, 1958, p. 963.

²⁴ Reprinted as document I.5.1.

²⁵ Reprinted in my *European Unification in the Twentieth Century* on p. 71.

BEYOND THE GRAND ALLIANCE

Although the Grand Alliance ceased to function as an alliance in 1946, its formal end only came in 1990, when by virtue of Article 7 (1) of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany of 12 September 1990 the four powers terminated:

“their rights and responsibilities relating to Berlin and to Germany as a whole” [and] “As a result, the corresponding, related quadripartite agreements, decisions and practices are terminated and all related Four Power institutions are dissolved.”

In the meantime, the Grand Allies concluded peace treaties on 10 February 1947 with Italy, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary and Finland. Austria was not required to sign a peace treaty as it was regarded as a victim of German aggression at the time of the *Anschluss*. By virtue of the State Treaty of 15 May 1955, Austria's re-establishment as a sovereign, independent and democratic state was recognised by the Allies and a new *Anschluss* with Germany was prohibited.

At the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the Western Allies bowed to the Soviet insistence that the political and territorial status quo (among them the Soviet territorial aggrandisements after the war) be recognised as inviolable.

AS WE NOW KNOW

After the end of the twentieth century, we now know that the objectives of Stalin and of Soviet diplomacy to extend totalitarian control by force have ended in failure. When the United States, in response to confrontation, decided on a policy of containment, it laid the foundation for Western cooperation. Western cooperation became the dynamic counter-attraction to communist world revolution. The Second World War in Europe broke out, when Hitler and Stalin attacked Poland with their joint objective to liquidate Poland from the map of Europe. The

Grand Alliance broke up, primarily, over the future of Poland. The Soviet system collapsed in 1989-1991, primarily, as a result of successful Polish – *Solidarnosc* – civil resistance against communist domination. The West had not won the Cold War, but Western cooperation had certainly attracted and inspired civil resistance.