

YALTA AGREEMENT

TREATY AT A GLANCE

Completed

February 11, 1945, at Yalta, USSR (present-day Ukraine)

Signatories

Soviet Union, United States, and Great Britain

Overview

As World War II wound down in Europe, the United States and Great Britain pressed for Soviet involvement in the continuing war against Japan. This document secured a Soviet pledge to declare war.

Historical Background

As the "Big Three"—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—concluded in the REPORT OF THE YALTA (CRIMEA) CONFERENCE on February 11, 1945, "Nazi Germany [was] doomed." However, the war in the Pacific, while its outcome was no longer seriously in doubt, ground on fiercely. The Japanese cause, too, was doomed, but the Japanese military continued to fight at great cost to themselves and to the Allies. Invasion of Japanese mainland was inevitable, but the Allied experience in taking back the Japanese-held islands of the Pacific suggested that the Japanese would resist invasion virtually to the last man.

Hitherto, the Soviets had refrained from declaring war on Japan, for Stalin had everything he could do to resist provoking a German invasion of his country, and when it came, to avoid fighting his own two-front war. Having incurred the greatest losses of all the powers involved in the war, the Soviets had no desire to turn from an incalculably dear victory over Germany to help Britain and the United States finish off Japan. Franklin Roosevelt, however, persuaded Stalin to declare war on Japan "two or three months after Germany has surrendered," in return for Soviet acquisition of southern Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Islands (the territories lost in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05) and Soviet dominance in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria.

Terms

The Yalta Agreement read in total as follows:



Yalta Agreement on the Kuriles and Entry of the Soviet Union in the War against Japan, 11 February 1945

The leaders of the three Great Powers—the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Great Britain—have agreed that in two or three months after Germany has surrendered and the war in Europe has terminated the Soviet Union shall enter into the war against Japan on the side of the Allies on condition that:

1. The *status quo* in Outer Mongolia (The Mongolian People's Republic) shall be preserved;

2. The former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored, viz:

(a) the southern part of Sakhalin as well as the islands adjacent to it shall be returned to the Soviet Union,

(b) the commercial port of Dairen shall be internationalized, the pre-eminent interests of the Soviet Union in this port being safeguarded and the lease of Port Arthur as a naval base of the U.S.S.R. restored,

(c) the Chinese-Eastern Railroad and the South-Manchurian Railroad which provides an outlet to Dairen shall be jointly operated by the establishment of a joint Soviet-Chinese Company, it being understood that the pre-eminent interests of the Soviet Union shall be safeguarded and that China shall retain full sovereignty in Manchuria;

3. The Kuril islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union.

It is understood that the agreement concerning Outer Mongolia and the ports and railroads referred to above will require concurrence of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. The President will take measures in order to obtain this concurrence on advice from Marshal Stalin.

The Heads of the three Great Powers have agreed that these claims of the Soviet Union shall be unquestionably fulfilled after Japan has been defeated.

For its part the Soviet Union expresses its readiness to conclude with the National Government of China a pact of friendship and alliance between the U.S.S.R. and China with its armed forces for the purpose of liberating China from the Japanese yoke.

February 11, 1945

J. STALIN
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
WINSTON S. CHURCHILL



Consequences

The Yalta Agreement turned out to be a very good deal for the Soviet Union. The dreaded invasion of Japan never occurred. Instead, the United States' Manhattan

Project produced atomic bombs, which were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9), devastating them. President Harry S Truman's decision to drop the bombs was in fact partly influenced by fears of increased Soviet sway in Japan should Russia have gotten involved in an invasion.

In any case, the Soviets, who had delayed declaring war on Japan within the time frame specified by the Yalta Agreement, quickly did so now, on August 8, two days after Hiroshima. On August 10, the Japanese indicated acceptance of most of the Allied surrender terms, and five days later bowed to the final American demand, that the emperor would be subject to the Supreme Allied Commander. The Soviets reaped the benefits of the Yalta Agreement without having to fight the Japanese.