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Covering the Map of the World — The Half-Century Legacy of the Yalta Conference, Part 6

by [Richard M. Ebeling](#), August 1995

[Part 1](#) | [Part 2](#) | [Part 3](#) | [Part 4](#) | [Part 5](#) | Part 6 | [Part 7](#) | [Part 8](#) | [Part 9](#)

In 1940, the Japanese consul general in Harbin, Manchuria, intercepted several messages sent from the Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, to the Soviet ambassador in Tokyo. In one of these messages, Molotov told his ambassador: "We concluded an 'Agreement with Germany' because a war is required in Europe" between the capitalist nations, to open the door for the future communization of the European continent. Molotov went on to explain that any peace settlement that would end the war between China and Japan "might destroy our work proceeding among the suppressed peoples of Asia, and . . . it would not instigate the Japanese-American war which we desire."

If Japan turned its eyes towards conquest in Southeast Asia — including the U.S.-controlled Philippine Islands — and became embroiled in a war with America, then Moscow could feel secure that the Japanese would not invade Soviet Siberia, as well. And in the chaos that a general war in Asia would create, the breeding ground for communist revolutions would be expanded. To help seal this likelihood, Stalin signed a non-aggression pact with Japan in April 1941.

In July 1941, a month after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, FDR's confidant, Harry Hopkins, was in Moscow meeting with Stalin, assuring the Soviet dictator of Roosevelt's intention of supplying the Red Army with as

much war materiel as it was possible to provide, with no strings attached. On August 1, FDR told his cabinet that he wanted the aid flowing to Stalin immediately. "The only answer I want to hear is that it is under way."

At that very moment, Stalin's greatest and most successful spy in the Far East, Richard Sorge — who had warned Moscow in early June 1941 that Hitler would attack the Soviet Union during the third week of June, predicting the invasion almost to the day (even though at the time Stalin refused to believe it) — was using his agents to find out if Japan was planning to attack north at Soviet Siberia or south into a collision course with the United States. On October 4, 1941, Sorge, in his last message to Moscow before his arrest by the Japanese police, informed Stalin:

The American issue and the question of the advance to the south are far more important [to the Japanese] than the Northern problem [the Soviet Union]. . . . There will be war with the U.S. this month or next. . . . Japan will attack the United States, then Malaya, Singapore and Sumatra.

Stalin had this information corroborated when Soviet intelligence intercepted a November 27 message from Tokyo to the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, saying that he was to "explain to Hitler that the main Japanese efforts will be concentrated in the south and that we propose to refrain from deliberate operations in the north (i.e., Siberia)."

But even as the American aid was beginning to flow into the Soviet Union to bolster the Red Army in the face of the German attack, Stalin kept this information from his most reliable spy to himself. Better not to warn Roosevelt about Japan's war intentions and better simply to watch the unfolding of the Japanese-American war that he wanted.

America had confronted Japan in the Pacific over Japanese ambitions in China. The Japanese military had occupied Manchuria in the autumn of 1931 and the neighboring province of Jehol in 1933 and had established their puppet state of Manchukuo. In July 1937, Japan initiated a new attack near Peiping (Peking), and soon the Japanese Army was advancing far into north-central China. In August 1937, Japanese forces attacked Shanghai, rapidly moved up the Yangtze River, and occupied the Nationalist Chinese capital at Nanking.

Chiang Kai-Shek, the head of the Chinese Nationalist government, moved his capital to the city of Chungking in western China. By 1939, even though they had occupied most of the coastal cities, the Japanese were bogged down in a

1940, in an attempt to cut off outside supplies to Chiang Kai-Shek's forces, the Japanese occupied the northern part of French Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). In July 1941, the Japanese occupied the southern part of the French colony.

President Roosevelt's freezing of Japanese assets in the United States and his embargo against the selling of oil to Japan in July 1941, as well as his unwillingness to negotiate any compromise with Tokyo, set the stage for the attack on Pearl Harbor. Once in the war, Roosevelt abandoned Chiang Kai-Shek and the Chinese resistance against Japan. As Frederick W. Marks has explained in his study of FDR's foreign policy, *Wind Over Sand* (1988):

In fact, Roosevelt broke virtually every important promise made to Chiang between the time of Pearl Harbor and his death in April, 1945. He shipped less than 10 percent of the aid pledged. He went back on his commitment to assist Chiang's Burma campaign with an amphibious invasion. At various times, supplies earmarked for Chungking were diverted without consultation. Scores of bombers and transports, once the entire U.S. Tenth Air Force in India, was rerouted to bypass China after the United States had given its word. Roosevelt pledged a loan of a billion dollars which was never delivered. And more than once, he promised increased tonnage to be flown from India over the Himalayan Hump. In almost every instance, such tonnage failed to eventuate.

Finally, after becoming sufficiently tired of Chiang Kai-Shek's complaints about American failure to support his government, FDR ordered that a plan be prepared for the assassination of the Chinese generalissimo. In December 1943, FDR's military representative in China, General Joseph Stilwell — who passionately disliked Chiang, often referring to him in public as "the Peanut" — told a subordinate, Col. Frank Dorn, that FDR was "fed up with Chiang and his tantrums, and said so. In fact, he told me in that Olympian manner of his, 'if you can't get along with Chiang, and can't replace him, get rid of him once and for all. You know what I mean, put in someone you can manage.'" Col. Dorn prepared a plan for an airplane mishap, in which there would be engine problems and, in the process of bailing out of the plane, Chiang and his wife

would be given faulty parachutes. The plan was not executed only because FDR decided not to issue final authorization.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Final Statement of His Chinese Ally, November 1943

negotiations with Stalin over the conditions under which the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan. In November 1943, on their way to their conference with Stalin at Teheran, FDR and Churchill met in Cairo, Egypt, with Chiang Kai-Shek. At the end of the meeting, they issued the Cairo Declaration, which said that America, Britain, and China "are fighting this war to restrain and punish the aggression of Japan. They covet no gain for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion. . . . [A]ll territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa and the Pescadores, will be restored to the Republic of China."

A few days later, at Teheran, Stalin said that once the war was over in Europe, the Soviet Union would be prepared, after a short time, to enter the war in the Pacific against Japan. But Stalin wanted to know what could be done for him in the Far East. When Churchill asked what he had in mind, Stalin explained that, while he did not want to go into details at this time, the Soviet Union had no completely ice-free port in the Far East. FDR suggested that the port of Dairen, on the southern coast of Manchuria, could be made into a free port. When Stalin responded that the Chinese might not agree, Roosevelt said he was sure they would as long as it was under "international guarantee." Stalin replied that he thought it sounded like a good idea.

In December 1944, two months before the Yalta Conference, Stalin had a conversation with Ambassador Averell Harriman in Moscow. Stalin now laid out his terms for participation in the war against Japan. He wanted from Japan the southern half of Sakhalin Island and the Kurile Islands. In China, he wanted Soviet leases of both Dairen and Port Arthur as well as control of the Manchurian railroads running from the Soviet border to these ports in southern Manchuria. And he wanted confirmation of the status quo of Outer Mongolia as a Soviet satellite, which it had been since 1921.

On February 8, 1945, on the fifth day of the Yalta Conference, Roosevelt and Stalin held a private meeting attended by their translators (Charles Bohlen, for FDR) as well as Averell Harriman and Vyacheslav Molotov. After discussing a number of topics, Stalin finally said that he wanted to discuss the "political

conditions" under which the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan. FDR said that he had already received a report from Harriman about their conversation in Moscow in December. Roosevelt said that he saw "no

Islands going to Russia at the end of the war." He reminded Stalin of his suggestion at Teheran that "the Soviet Union be given the use of a warm water port" at Dairen.

Stalin replied that "there was another question and that involved the use by the Russians of the Manchurian railways." He said that the Czars had had use of the rail line running east-west across the northern half of Manchuria and the rail line running south from the city of Harbin to Dairen and Port Arthur on the Manchurian coast. Stalin said that it was "clear that if these conditions were not met it would be difficult for him and Molotov to explain to the Soviet people why Russia was entering the war against Japan." Furthermore, Stalin wanted "these conditions set forth in writing agreed to by the three powers" before leaving Yalta. In *Witness to History* (1973), Charles Bohlen admitted that Stalin's reference to the opinion of the Soviet people was nonsense. "Everybody knew that all the power in the Soviet Union resided in Stalin, but as a courtesy, no one at the Yalta Conference disputed him."

On February 11, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill affixed their signatures to the "top secret" protocol on Soviet entry into the Pacific war:

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 all the islands adjacent to it shall be returned to the Soviet Union,
 - (b) the commercial port of Dairen shall be internationalized, the preeminent interests of the Soviet Union in this port being safeguarded and the lease of Port Arthur as a naval base of the USSR 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

preeminent interests of the Soviet Union shall be safeguarded and that China shall retain full sovereignty in Manchuria;

3. The Kowloon peninsula 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 [FDR] will take measures in order to obtain this concurrence on advice from Marshall 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.

After the war, when this secret protocol to the Yalta agreements was finally made public, former U. S. Ambassador William C. Bullitt wrote:

At Yalta . . . President Roosevelt broke the pledge which he had made to the Chinese government at Cairo and — secretly, behind the back of China — signed . . . an agreement by which the vital rights of China were sacrificed to Soviet imperialism. . . . In view of Roosevelt's Cairo pledge that Manchuria would be restored to China this secret agreement was entirely dishonorable.

In his book *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin: 1941-1946* (1975), Averell Harriman said that at Yalta he had tried to dissuade FDR from accepting the wording in the protocol. He told FDR that he did not like the U.S. endorsing the legitimacy of Soviet "preeminent interests" in Manchuria, pledging itself to seeing that these interests were "safeguarded" and committing itself to assuring that Stalin's territorial claims would be "unquestionably fulfilled" at the end of the war, regardless of Chinese agreement. Roosevelt replied that he "was not disposed to fuss about words." FDR said that "it was just language" and "he was not going to quarrel with Stalin." In clear frustration, Harriman observed: "It was my impression that as long as [FDR] could put his own interpretation on the language, he didn't much care what interpretation other people put on it."

Trading away the rights of other peoples and countries clearly never bothered Franklin Roosevelt's conscience. FDR told Harriman there were "other matters more important, the establishment of the United Nations, for example." And he wasn't going "to use up whatever trading positions he had." No, Stalin's

participation in FDR's dream of a global peace organization was far more important than the national independence and personal freedom of tens of millions of people. Those were "trading positions" he was more than willing to

[Part 1](#) | [Part 2](#) | [Part 3](#) | [Part 4](#) | [Part 5](#) | Part 6 | [Part 7](#) | [Part 8](#) | [Part 9](#)

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