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REVIEW ARTICLE:
WHAT DID ROOSEVELT AND CHURCHILL REALLY AIM
TO ACHIEVE FOR POLAND AT YALTA?
WAS YALTA THE PRICE OF PEACE?

S. M. Ploky, *Yalta: The Price of Peace*. New York: Viking, Penguin Books, 2010, Pp.451 including illustrations, notes and index. ISBN 978-0-670-02141-3.

Much has been written over the last sixty-five years on the “Big Three” Yalta Conference of February 1945; there are many studies and documentary publications as well as — except for Russia — unrestricted access to archival sources. S. M. Ploky,¹ a historian born and educated in Ukraine and Moscow, professor of Ukrainian History at Harvard University and author of several books on Russian and Ukrainian history, has written another study, but this time within a broader framework than those published up to now. In the introduction to the book under review he stresses the need to set the Yalta Conference in its historical context as a wartime summit when victory over Germany was close, but not yet achieved. He also believes that the three Allied statesmen — President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill and Joseph V. Stalin — “helped end the war and established the conditions for a negotiated peace, however imperfect that peace turned out to be.” Their agreements, he claims, “helped preserve the longest peace in European history” (xxvi). As he admits, these agreements did, however, involve the sacrifice of principles dear to the Western statesmen because the price was the subjection of half of Europe to a totalitarian régime (xxvi).

Ploky interweaves background information with a lively account of the discussions and agreements on the issues facing the “Big Three” at the Yalta Conference of February 4-11, 1945: Western-Soviet military cooperation in the final phase of the European war; the dismemberment of Germany; reparations; the membership of and voting procedure in the U.N. Security Council; Soviet cooperation with the United States in the war against Japan; Soviet POW repatriation and what appeared to be the major political problem: the make-up of a new Polish provisional government and

¹ The publisher chose this spelling of the author’s name. The correct English transliteration is Serhii Plokhii.

free elections in Poland. He shows how skillfully Stalin managed the proceedings, so that Roosevelt and Churchill conceded most of what he wanted, yet left Yalta satisfied with the results. One can, however, question the sincerity of FDR's and Churchill's goals for a free and independent Poland as first stated at the conference; perhaps their opening statements were bargaining positions when they were prepared to accept less? In any case, it is frequently argued that the Yalta agreements were the best that could be made in view of the Red Army's strong presence in Eastern Europe, a view generally shared by Plokhy. Indeed, as the conference opened, the Red Army had driven the Germans out of Poland; it had earlier entered Romania — which switched sides — and Bulgaria, where the communists immediately seized power. It was also fighting the Germans in Budapest and East Prussia, while Marshal Georgii Zhukov was within striking distance of Berlin, although he did not reach it until April of that year.

In the first chapters of the book, the author gives an informative and at times entertaining overview of the immediate background to the Yalta Conference, the second "Big Three" meeting after Tehran (November 28 — December 2, 1943).² Churchill, Roosevelt and their staffs met for two days at Malta on the way to Crimea. The Prime Minister flew in from Britain with his Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and the British delegation. (One of the planes overshot the island and crashed). President Roosevelt and part of the U.S. delegation (the British and U.S. members of the Combined Chiefs of Staff flew to Malta) traveled on board the U.S.S. Quincy. Roosevelt — wanting to avert Stalin's suspicion of the President's "ganging up" on him with Churchill — avoided any discussion with the prime minister of joint strategies to use at the conference, but agreed to meetings between the two Foreign Secretaries, Anthony Eden and Edward R. Stettinius, as well as meetings between the high military officers of both nations. The two delegations — numbering about 700 people, including all the diplomats, military, and supporting staff — then flew in a fleet of planes, with fighter escort, to Saki airfield in the Crimea. From there, the President and the Prime Minister rode for almost six hours by jeep over rocky mountain roads — lined all the way by saluting Soviet troops, including women — to Yalta, Stalin's choice for the conference location. The delegations traveled the same route in U.S.-made Packards and Soviet ZIS limousines. They were all housed in three previously Imperial Russian palaces: the Livadia Palace for Roosevelt and the American delegates; the Vorontsov Palace for Churchill and the British delegation, and the Yusoupov palace, now called the Koreiz

²For a survey of the longer background showing how the 1943 Allied conferences prepared the ground for the decisions of the Yalta Conference, see Keith Sainsbury, *The Turning Point. Roosevelt, Stalin, Churchill, and Chiang-Kai-Shek, 1943. The Moscow, Cairo, and Teheran Conferences* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Villa after the village of Koreiz, for Stalin and the Russian delegation. Plokhy notes that Livadia, the holiday residence of the last Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, had been owned previously by a Count Potocki, while Count Mikhail Vorontsov was ambassador to Britain in the early 1800s. He and his Polish wife, Countess Alexandra Branicka, had a son, educated in England, who married into the Herbert family before returning to Russia; the portraits of two Herberts were thoughtfully displayed in Churchill's quarters. The palaces and the Koreiz villa — apparently Stalin did not wish to keep the Yusupov palace name — were renovated at top speed in about three weeks beginning on January 8 — when the location was finally confirmed by Churchill to Stalin — under the supervision of the chief of the NKVD (The People's Committee of Internal Affairs, i.e. the Soviet Security Police), Lavrentii P. Beria, who made sure that the western delegations' quarters were thoroughly bugged. There was either not enough time to install the plumbing, or it was thought unnecessary for all the delegates. In any case, toilet and washing facilities were scarce, except for the President, the Prime Minister, and their Foreign Secretaries, who had their own bathrooms; the rest had to stand in line and even Marshals had to use buckets. Sir Alexander Cadogan, head of the Foreign Office, was glad he could use Eden's bathroom. Soviet security was so tight that delegates had to show their I.D. cards when walking from one building to another, and no one was allowed outside the conference grounds to avoid uncontrolled contact with the natives. Plokhy notes that the same treatment was meted out by the Russian court to foreign ambassadors in Moscow in the 16th and 17th centuries (50).

The author also provides a very informative chapter on Stalin, "The Red Host," giving key information on the terror he inflicted on Soviet citizens and others, including the "Great Purge" of 1937-1938 (usually called the Great Terror) which claimed "hundreds of thousands of lives" (58). Here, one might add, that the largest ethnic group to suffer death by shooting consisted of 111,091 Soviet Poles, who constituted one eighth of the 681,692 Soviet citizens shot at that time. They were charged with espionage and shot on this and other trumped up charges along with thousands of Finns, Russians and persons of all Soviet nationalities viewed by the Stalin régime as capable of cooperating with the enemy in time of war. The victims of this massacre included four of the five Soviet marshals and thousands of higher officers, although it did not make sense to weaken the Red Army officer corps if Stalin really expected the USSR to be involved in a war, presumably with Germany.³ Perhaps for reasons of space,

³ For a brief treatment of Stalin's Great Terror, 1937-1938, by a prominent Russian historian, see Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House. Stalin and his Inner Circle*, Translated by Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), chapter 5. See also Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) chapter 3. For the number of Poles shot in 1937-38, see pp. 103-104. Snyder notes that Poles had

the author does not mention the four million Ukrainian peasants — out of an estimated total of seven to eight million Soviet citizens — who died of hunger during Stalin's forced collectivization in the early 1930s.⁴ Also, in writing about Stalin's deportation of potentially "harmful" elements from newly taken territories (62), the author does not mention the Poles, Balts, Jews and Ukrainians, deported in 1940-41. Likewise, there is no mention of the Volga Germans, deported en masse from their lands to Russia's northern territories after the German attack on the USSR. Plokhy does, however, mention the murder of Soviet Jews involved in the postwar plan for a Jewish autonomous state in Crimea — killed after the state of Israel turned out to be a Western ally — and the deportation of the Crimean Tatars.

Of the issues discussed at Yalta, two were of primary importance to President Roosevelt: (a) Soviet participation in the war against Japan, urgently needed to reduce the expected great loss of American lives in the battles for the Japanese home islands; (b) the membership of the United Nations Security Council and its voting procedure. On the first issue, FDR signed a secret agreement with Stalin on February 11, securing the confirmation of the Soviet leader's promise — made at the Big Three Tehran Conference in late 1943— for the USSR to fight Japan, and now setting the date for three months after the end of the war in Europe. In return, Stalin was to obtain territory at the expense of Japan.⁵ Regarding the Security Council, FDR obtained Stalin's agreement to the U.S. voting formula which conceded Stalin's demand for the right of veto by Permanent Members on issues threatening the peace and/or involving themselves or their allies (123-124).⁶ Roosevelt also succeeded in including China along with the United States, Britain, the USSR and France (added during the conference mainly on Churchill's insistence) as Permanent Members. FDR subordinated all other matters to these two objectives. As part of Stalin's reward for aid against Japan, the president also agreed to seats for Soviet Belarus and Soviet Ukraine in the U.N. General Assembly in addition to the USSR. (This was an alleged Soviet concession from Stalin's earlier, clearly bargaining gambit of demanding seats for all Soviet republics).

also been disproportionately targeted in Stalin's anti-Kulak action in Soviet Ukraine, *ibid.* *Kulak* was the term used for allegedly rich peasants.

⁴ For the most recent survey of the developing hunger and Stalin's political justification of mass starvation in Ukraine, 1932-1933, and also for numbers of the chapter victims, see Snyder, *Bloodlands*, chapter 1.

⁵ See *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, (referred to as FRUS), Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 984.

⁶ The absence of the USSR on the Security Council allowed its members to vote for sending U.S. and other troops to assist South Korea in what developed into the Korean War.

Among other key issues, FDR and Churchill both agreed to Stalin's demands for the dismemberment of Germany — which Roosevelt favored more than Churchill — and confirmed a Soviet zone of occupation. They balked, however, at Soviet demands for such enormous German reparations as to make Germany economically unviable. It was agreed that the Germans were to pay \$20 billion, of which the USSR was to receive half. (As tensions rose over Germany, however, this agreement fell by the wayside). The western leaders also agreed to the forcible repatriation of Soviet military taken prisoner by the Germans, which was equivalent to a death sentence on their return to the USSR, or, at best, many years in a labor camp. The Western Allies agreed to this shameful and tragic "repatriation" for fear that their own military, taken prisoner by the Germans and most liberated by the Red Army, might not be released unless the Soviet demand was met. They also agreed to "repatriate" Soviet military who had fought on the German side as well as all Russian civilians. This meant not only Soviet civilians who had volunteered to work in Germany, or had been forcibly deported there, but also former Russian citizens who had fled Russia and lived for years in other countries, especially France and Yugoslavia; they were hunted down, caught, and forcibly dispatched to the USSR.

The most difficult issue at Yalta, which came up at seven of the eight plenary conference sessions, appeared to be the make-up of a new provisional government of Poland, and the agreement reached seems far from the goal stated by FDR and Churchill at the outset of the conference. Plokhy devotes four of the thirty-one chapters in his book to the Yalta discussions on Poland (12, 13, 15, 19). In his view, before the conference began, the Americans saw Poland as "the acid test of Soviet goodwill" and the essential guarantee for realizing their dream of establishing the United Nations (153). The author's presentation of American views, however, hardly fits President Roosevelt, who told the U.S. Ambassador to the USSR, W. Averell Harriman, in 1944, that "he didn't care whether the countries bordering Russia became communized."⁷ Nor did it fit his chief adviser, Harry Hopkins, whose sympathies lay with Moscow. The author of a U.S. Briefing Book Paper prepared for the Yalta Conference likely expressed the general view of U.S. officials at this time in stating that: "Politically, while this Government probably would not oppose predominant Soviet influence in the area, neither would it wish American influence to be completely nullified." The author went on to suggest that U.S. influence could be exerted in trade, investments," etc., while the U.S. could also gain good will by giving reconstruction aid, which would also improve conditions and thus permit "relatively liberal policies."⁸ The anonymous author's attitude toward

⁷See William Larsh, "Yalta and the American Approach to Free Elections," *The Polish Review*, XL/3 (1995), p. 280.

⁸"Reconstruction of Poland and Balkans: American Interests and Soviet Attitude," *FRUS. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, pp. 234-235.

Eastern Europe was remarkably similar to that of the British Foreign Office in the era of appeasement.⁹ As it turned out, FDR was ready to accept any Polish government satisfactory to Stalin as long as the latter was willing to consider including Stanisław Mikołajczyk (1901-1966), former premier of the Polish government in London, who was ready to accept the loss of most of former eastern Poland to the USSR and compensation with German territory in the west. Mikołajczyk was, it should be noted, the number two leader of the Polish Peasant Party, the largest political party in Poland, (The aged and ailing Wincenty Witos was politically inactive in German-occupied Poland). Stalin's agreement to some method of setting up a democratic Polish government which would hold free elections was indispensable to FDR for securing the continued support of Polish-American voters for the Democratic Party. Plokhy recognizes that this was the president's main concern with Poland at Yalta on February 9 (243), but it can be assumed that this was the case even before the conference began.¹⁰

For the British, writes Plokhy, Polish independence had great symbolic value since they had come into the war on account of Poland, and that country was also bound up with their hope to check Soviet expansion (153). It is true that Poland was more important to Churchill than to Roosevelt, for Britain was allied with Poland.¹¹ One should also note that the British people valued Polish airmen, who helped win the Battle of Britain, and that some 150,000 Polish military were fighting the Germans under British command in north-western Europe and Italy. Therefore, British public opinion, although sympathetic to Soviet territorial demands, expected a free and independent Poland to emerge from the war, so Churchill felt bound to demand free elections and a truly democratic Polish government — but how far was he willing to go to obtain these goals? Did he really, as the

⁹ After the Munich Conference, which awarded part of Czechoslovakia (the Sudetenland) to Nazi Germany, the Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Office, Alexander Cadogan noted: "We must cut our losses in central and eastern Europe — let Germany, if she can, find there her 'lebensraum,' and establish herself, if she can, as a powerful economic unit." See *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945*, edited by David Dilks (London: Cassell, 1971), 14 October 1938, p. 119.

¹⁰On U.S. policy on Poland, as well as the attitudes and politics of American Polonia, see Richard C. Lukas, *The Strange Allies. The United States and Poland 1941-1945* (Knoxville TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1978); see also Piotr S. Wandycz, *The United States and Poland* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1980), chapter 5. For a recent study of FDR's policy toward Poland at this time, see Cienciala, "The United States and Poland in World War II. An Overview," *The Polish Review* LIV/3 (2009) pp. 173-194.

¹¹For the Anglo-Polish Agreement on Mutual Assistance of August 25, 1939 and its Secret Protocol, see Włodzimierz Borodziej, Sławomir Dębski, eds., *Polish Documents on Foreign Policy 24 October 1938 — 30 September 1939* (Warsaw: The Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2009), docs. 180, 181.

author writes, see Poland as Britain's "last hope of checking Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe" (153)? After all, there were to be Soviet zones of occupation in Austria and Germany; also, Churchill had signed an informal agreement with Stalin on British and Soviet spheres of influence in the Balkans in October 1944 (146-148). Given the above, Soviet agreement to free elections in an independent Poland would achieve the more limited goals of satisfying Parliament and British public opinion, as well as to secure some British influence in Poland. It was probably with these goals in mind that Churchill aimed at a Polish government including Mikołajczyk and two of his most important supporters in London, Stanisław Grabski and Tadeusz Romer.¹²

Whatever the case may be, Stalin was well informed about the Western leaders' thinking on Poland and all other issues to be discussed at the Yalta Conference. The Soviet Intelligence service had obtained British and U.S. preparatory papers, so Stalin knew both what would be proposed by his Western Allies and what they deemed acceptable. As Plokhy writes: "On January 23 and 28, Soviet spymasters had briefed Stalin on the American and British negotiating strategies." (78) Indeed, the day before the Conference opened, Stalin had received a Russian translation of the memorandum on the British strategy to be followed there. Stalin's most valuable agents were British citizens, members of the infamous "Cambridge Five," of whom Guy Burgess and John Cairncross had access at different times to Foreign Office documents, while Donald MacLean, posted to the British Embassy, Washington, D.C. in spring 1944 — where he was soon joined by Burgess — delivered copies of the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence on issues of key interest to Stalin (78-79). Furthermore, a key source of information on FDR was one of Stalin's American agents, Lauchlin Currie, a counselor to the President (5).¹³

¹²Stanisław Grabski (1871-1949), once a Socialist, then a moderate conservative and prominent politician in interwar Poland, chaired the Polish National Council, London, 1942-1944. He returned to Poland, and held the honorary post of Deputy President of the communist-dominated Home National Council [Krajowa Rada Narodowa, KRN] that acted as a surrogate parliament, until the elections of January 27, 1947; he died in Poland. (For information on the forming of the KRN, see note 18 below). Tadeusz Romer (1894-1978), was a diplomat and foreign minister of the Polish government in London. He decided against returning to Poland, settled in Montreal and taught French at McGill University. He left his papers to the Canadian National Archives, Ottawa.

¹³ The two other members of the Cambridge Five — so named because they had been students at Cambridge University when they decided to serve the Soviet Union, which they saw as the hope of mankind — were Harold Adrian Russell, known as Kim Philby, and Anthony Blunt. Lauchlin Currie had provided Moscow with a copy of Harry Hopkins' report to the President on his trip to the Soviet capital in summer 1941. See Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vasiliev,

Thus Stalin knew at the outset that while the two western leaders would not recognize the communist-dominated Provisional Polish Government — then called the “Lublin Government” — which he had recognized, while both favored the “Curzon Line” which he demanded as the postwar frontier between Poland and the USSR (154-155). This meant they agreed that most of former eastern Poland (today’s western Belarus and western Ukraine, also part of Lithuania, annexed by Stalin in 1939) would be part of the postwar USSR.¹⁴ In fact, the western leaders had agreed informally to the Curzon Line as the postwar Polish-Soviet frontier at the Tehran Conference in late 1943, as well as on compensating Poland with German territory, but except for most of East Prussia, this territory had not been defined. Here Plokhy might have noted that both the Foreign Office and most of British public opinion — that is, those interested in foreign affairs — saw the Curzon Line as ethnically justified either because they thought the population was mostly Russian, or knew the Poles were an overall minority east of the Curzon Line. Few western experts on foreign affairs knew that the Poles formed about one third of the region’s prewar population of some twelve million people, followed by Jews, Ukrainians and Belarusians, but with Polish majorities in the cities and regions of Wilno/Vilnius and Lwów/Lviv.¹⁵ It is also worth noting that the long German, Austrian and Russian domination over East Central Europe, which lasted until 1917-18, overshadowed the brief, interwar existence of the Baltic States, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and favored the assumption that it was natural for all of Eastern Europe to be under great power domination. Furthermore, the traditional F.O. view was that the Curzon Line represented the best frontier between Poland and the Soviet Union.¹⁶

The Haunted Wood. Soviet Espionage in America — the Stalin Era (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 159.

¹⁴ The Curzon Line was named after British Foreign Secretary Nathaniel Curzon who proposed it to the Bolshevik government in July 1920 as an armistice line in the Polish-Soviet War. However, Lenin rejected it at that time in favor of advancing on the Polish capital, Warsaw, and hopefully on to Germany. See Piotr S. Wandycz, *Soviet-Polish Relations 1917-1921* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); Anna M. Cienciala and Titus Komarnicki, *From Versailles to Locarno. Keys to Polish Foreign Policy, 1919-1925* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1984), chapter 6. For a detailed study of the peace negotiations resulting in the Polish-Soviet Treaty of Riga, March 18, 1921, see Jerzy Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace of 1921 and the Creation of Interwar Europe* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ See map facing the title page of *From Versailles to Locarno*, showing the Polish population, the international boundaries 1914-1921, and the Curzon Line, which approximates the post-WWII eastern boundary of Poland.

¹⁶ In an editorial published in the *London Times* on March 10, 1943, Edward Hallett Carr (1892-1982), formerly in the Foreign Office, who had supported the appeasement of Hitler but later became a historian of the USSR, proposed a

By early 1945, Mikołajczyk realized there was no alternative to this solution. Plokhy mentions that in his talks with British officials on the eve of the Yalta Conference, the former Polish premier insisted on assurances that Poland be sufficiently compensated in the west for her losses in the east. This was the main point of his memorandum to the British government of late January 1945, in which he stressed the importance of an independent Poland, although he did not exclude cooperation with the Lublin government (163). As far as the new provisional government was concerned, he proposed a meeting of the leaders of major Polish parties in Poland to secure free elections, which were to be monitored by British, American and Russian observers (163).¹⁷ Mikołajczyk's successor as premier of the Polish government in London, Tomasz Arciszewski, sent the British a proposal for an Inter-Allied Commission to form a new Polish government, but opposed any discussion of Polish frontiers (163-164). He was generally ignored, as were his letters to Churchill and FDR (152). On the eve of Yalta, Eden wrote Churchill: "Unless we get a free and independent Poland our future cooperation with him [Stalin], whether we will or not, is bound to be affected" (164). The experts at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, however, gave a realistic appraisal of the situation, which was surely known to Roosevelt. They reported that the Soviet government saw the Polish situation as a "fait accompli," expecting western recognition of the Polish Provisional Government (recognized by Stalin), or at least sending their representatives to it (164-165).

Nevertheless, when Poland first came up at Yalta at the Plenary Session on February 6, 1945, Roosevelt first gave an oblique recognition of the Curzon Line as Poland's eastern frontier, although he made a feeble plea for the Soviet concession of Lwów [Lviv] and the neighboring oilfields to Poland (154). (He probably viewed it as fulfilling his promise to Mikołajczyk in June 1944 that he would try to secure these concessions from Stalin). He then proposed forming a "Presidential Council" which would appoint a new Polish government. This council was to consist of representatives of the major Polish political groups. Plokhy cites a Russian source stating that FDR mentioned Bolesław Bierut, "the leader of the Lublin Poles" (157), who was then President of the so-called "Homeland National Council," and Archbishop Stefan Sapieha of Kraków, among

postwar British zone up to the Rhine River and a Soviet zone up to the Oder River. For the best study of British policy on the Polish-Soviet frontier in World War II, see Jacek Tebinka, *Polityka brytyjska wobec problemu granicy polsko-radzieckiej 1939-1945* [*British Policy on the Problem of the Polish-Soviet Frontier, 1939-1945*] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton. Instytut Historii PAN, 1998).

¹⁷Cienciała, "Great Britain and Poland Before and After Yalta," *The Polish Review*, XL/3 (1995) pp. 297- 298.

others.¹⁸ They were to form a government made up of the leaders of the five major Polish political parties. In any case, FDR qualified his proposals as just a “suggestion” (157).

That same day, Churchill made an impassioned speech for a free and independent Poland, which was to be “mistress in her own house and captain of her soul” (158). He said this was a question of “British honor.” He also proposed the immediate formation, at Yalta, of a new Polish government that would include Mikołajczyk, Stanisław Grabski and Tadeusz Romer. As Plokhy notes, they “were prepared to recognize the new Polish-Soviet boundary” (158). This government would pave the way for a free vote by the Polish people on a constitution and a new Polish administration. Stalin replied to Churchill with an equally impassioned speech setting forth his point of view. He said that for the USSR, Poland, was not just a matter of “honor” — as for the British — but of Soviet national security because the Germans had twice invaded Russia through “the Polish Corridor.” (He did not mention that he had helped Hitler destroy the Polish state in September 1939). He stated that the USSR had abandoned the old Tsarist policy; it wanted a free, independent and powerful Poland. He touted the Curzon Line and claimed that “agents” of the Polish government in London were killing Soviet officers and soldiers, a statement Plokhy rightly calls “sheer demagoguery” (167). As for Roosevelt’s suggestion that Lwów/Lviv remain in Poland, Stalin claimed it for the Ukrainians. On the Polish government, he remarked that a new one could not be formed without consulting the Poles and ended his speech by asking: “Should we ask the Warsaw Poles to come here or perhaps to Moscow?” (168). This was an obvious hint that he did not see it necessary to invite other Poles for consultation.

¹⁸Bolesław Bierut (1896-1956) was a prewar communist activist and Soviet agent, who survived Stalin’s murder of Polish communists in the USSR in 1937-38 because he was then imprisoned in Poland. He headed the Polish Workers’ Party, then the United Workers’ Party, and the Polish satellite state until his death in Moscow in February 1956. The Homeland National Council [Krajowa Rada Narodowa, KRN] was a left-wing, pro-Soviet organization formed in Warsaw on December 31, 1943, whose members formed part of The Polish Council of National Liberation [Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, PKWN], established in Moscow on July 20, 1944. The PKWN became the Polish Provisional Government on December 31, 1944, and was recognized by Stalin on January 1, 1945. For documents in English, see Antony Polonsky and Boleslaw Drukier, eds., *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland, December 1943 — June 1945* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980). Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha (1867-1951), Archbishop of Kraków, 1925-1951, had supported the National Democrats in prewar Poland. See Neal Pease, *Rome’s Most Faithful Daughter: The Catholic Church and Independent Poland, 1914-1939* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2009). He had earned great respect by his unbending attitude toward the German occupation authorities, who also respected him.

Plokhy surely exaggerates in stating that at this time — February 6, 1945 — Stalin “was faced with a united front” (on the Polish government). In the author’s view, the closing of what Stalin called “the Polish Corridor” (Poland) was of supreme geostrategic importance to the USSR, so the Soviet leader “could not afford to lose on this issue” and apparently decided to make an emotional appeal (176). As the author writes elsewhere, however, the British and U.S. quarters at Yalta had been expertly bugged by the NKVD (233-234),¹⁹ so Churchill’s speech should not have been a surprise to Stalin. On the contrary, he would have had time to prepare his. Whatever the case may be, Roosevelt wrote Stalin a letter, suggesting that Polish politicians, not only from the Lublin government but also Mikołajczyk, Stanisław Grabski, and Tadeusz Romer from London, Archbishop Sapieha and others from Poland, should come to Yalta. Here, they would form a new government and hold free elections in Poland (179). Thus Roosevelt supported Churchill’s proposal.

Discussion on the Polish government resumed after an interlude on the Security Council. Stalin acknowledged receiving FDR’s letter “an hour and a half ago” and said he had tried to reach Bierut and [Osóbka]-Morawski (then President of the Provisional Government recognized by Stalin), but they were outside Warsaw. He thought it would be good if Sapieha and others could arrive at Yalta, but did not know their addresses (!) and feared there was not enough time to form a new Polish government (196). Molotov then presented a new Soviet proposal on Poland, which envisaged *adding* some “democratic” leaders from “Polish émigré circles.” This mollified both the U.S. and British delegates, although Churchill rejected the “émigré” label for the London Poles; he said they were not émigrés but “Poles temporarily abroad” (197-198). The western leaders probably did not know that in Stalin’s dictionary “democratic” meant politicians who toed the Soviet line.

This exchange was followed by the presentation of new British and American proposals, but Churchill soon accepted the U.S. proposal of a presidential council of three members, including a communist. This council would form a new government, consulting Poles in Poland and abroad. An important new point was added here — the council members would be the two Allied ambassadors, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, Britain, and W. Averill Harriman, U.S.A, plus Molotov for the USSR: they would deliberate in Moscow. The government formed in these deliberations would organize free elections in Poland (198). Molotov, however, rejected the idea of any

¹⁹On the bugging, Plokhy cites the memoirs of a former NKVD official, Pavel Sudoplatov and Anatoly Sudoplatov (Pavel’s son), with Jerrold L. and Leona P. Schechter, *Special Tasks* (Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1994), pp.225-226, but these refer to the taping of Sudoplatov’s conversation with Harriman before Yalta; Plokhy also cites the memoirs of Beria’s son, Sergo Beria, *Beria, My Father. Inside Stalin’s Kremlin* (London: Duckworth, 2001), p. 104.

“council” forming a *new* Polish government. He stuck by the existing Lublin government, with the addition of a few Poles recommended by the western governments (198). Churchill put up a strong fight against Molotov’s claim that the Lublin government was popular with the Poles and protested British lack of access to the country. He mentioned the Polish Army of 150,000 under British command and said the Poles would protest against the type of government proposed by Molotov. Moreover, “His Majesty’s Government would be charged in Parliament with having forsaken altogether the cause of Poland.” His government, said the Prime Minister, could not abandon its recognition of the Polish government in London unless satisfied that the new government truly represented that nation (199). It should be noted that Churchill had elections in mind; they were due in July that year.

A new aspect of the Polish question appeared when Molotov presented the Soviet proposals for Polish borders. Here, he departed from Stalin’s earlier support for the Oder-Eastern Neisse Line as the western border, by proposing the Western Neisse Line — which meant giving all of Upper Silesia to Poland (201). He did not tell FDR and Churchill that this frontier had been agreed by the Soviet government and the PKWN in Moscow on July 27, 1944.²⁰ It is only partly true that, as Plokhy writes, by the early 20th century, most of the Silesian population, especially in the Wrocław (formerly Breslau) region, had been Germanized (201). In fact, most of the population east of the Oder River, but south of Wrocław, voted for Poland in the Upper Silesian plebiscite of March 1921.²¹ In any case, the

²⁰For the Polish text of the frontier agreement, see Włodzimierz T. Kowalski, I.A. Khrenov, eds., *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich* [*Documents and Materials for the History of Polish-Soviet Relations*] tom VIII (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1974) doc. 76, pp. 158-159; the same in vol. VIII of the concurrently published Russian series, Moscow. For accounts of the July 1944 negotiations in Moscow, see Edward Puacz, “Sprawa granic Polski w układach między P.K.W.N. a ZSSR” [“The Issue of Polish Frontiers in the Agreements between the PKWN and the USSR”], in which he cites the written account of Edward Osóbka-Morawski, then Chair of the PKWN, later President of the Lublin government, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, Paris, 1969, no. 15, 197-208. For a recent Polish study, see Wojciech Materski, *Dyplomacja Polski „lubelskiej.” Lipiec 1944 — Marzec 1947* [*The Diplomacy of “Lublin” Poland. July 1944 — March 1947*], (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2007), chapter 1.

²¹On the question of Upper Silesia in 1919-21, see Cienciala and Komarnicki, *From Versailles To Locarno*, chapter 3. Given a broader choice, it is likely that most Silesians living on both sides of the Oder River, who had a strong regional identity, might have voted for an independent Silesia or an autonomous Silesia in Germany. See Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalisms: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848-1918* (Purdue University Press, West Lafayette IN 2007), 195-196.

British and U.S. leaders decided to make their agreement to the Oder-Western Neisse Line dependent on the new Polish government's assurance that free elections would soon be held in Poland. (This was done at the Potsdam Conference held in July-August 1945).

The final decisions made on Poland were pre-judged not just by the overwhelming Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe, but also by the Stalin-FDR agreement, mentioned earlier, for the USSR to come into the war against Japan. Although the written agreement was not signed until February 11, the basic agreement was reached in a short, private conversation between the two leaders on February 8 (223-224). Thus, the discussions on the Polish question on the last two days of the conference, February 9 and 10, were devoted to finding a formula satisfactory for the three heads of state. Plokhy is right to state of FDR that: "What he needed was a document on Poland that would satisfy his domestic constituencies but still be acceptable to Stalin." (243). This was, in fact, FDR's main concern regarding the Polish question from the time it appeared on his agenda with the breakdown of Polish-Soviet relations over Katyn in late April 1943.²² As for Churchill, he needed such a document to satisfy Parliament and British public opinion, especially ahead of the elections of July 1945. The key to a Polish solution satisfactory to all of the "Big Three" was the Western leaders' agreement to "reorganize" the existing Polish government by "adding" democratic Poles, instead of insisting on establishing a new one. Also, the deliberations to this end were to be held — as FDR had proposed earlier — in Moscow. In further negotiations, Molotov added word changes which proved important later, such as allowing only "non-fascist" parties to participate in the "free" elections. FDR and Churchill also obtained Stalin's assent to the "Declaration on Liberated Europe," which stipulated free elections in all liberated territories. Did the Western leaders really believe that Stalin would keep his word? Whatever the case may be, Stalin told a worried Molotov that the outcome would be dictated by the correlation of forces at the time (271). In early February 1945, there was no doubt this correlation meant the presence of the Red Army in most of Eastern Europe and part of Germany. Plokhy gives a good account of Molotov's strategy

²² On Katyn, see the studies listed in note 10 above. For recent works, see Allen Paul, *Katyn. Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth* (Northern Illinois Press, DeKalb, IN, 2010); Eugenia Maresch, *Katyn 1940. The Documentary Evidence of the West's Betrayal* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, England: Spellmount, 2010); George Sandford, *Katyn and the Soviet Massacre of 1940. Truth, Justice and Memory* (Routledge, London and New York, 2005). For a selection of translated Russian documents on Katyn, with commentary, notes, biographical sketches, a glossary of political organizations and parties, also maps and aerial photographs of execution sites, see Anna M. Cienciala, Natalia S. Lebedeva, and Wojciech Materski, *Katyn. A Crime Without Punishment* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2007; reprint with corrections, 2009).

and tactics in the post-Yalta deliberations on the new Polish government by the Moscow “commission” of Ambassadors Clark-Kerr, Harriman, and the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He duly notes Molotov’s blocking of the ambassadors’ suggested democratic Polish candidates from London and Poland, as well as the Soviet kidnapping and show trial of the sixteen Polish underground leaders who had recognized the Yalta agreements and declared themselves candidates for the new government.²³ The new U.S. president, Harry S. Truman, sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow in June 1945, where he was to persuade Stalin to free the sixteen Polish leaders. He may have helped prevent their execution, but two of them, General Okulicki and Jan Stanisław Jankowski, the last Delegate of the Polish Government in Poland, died in prison.²⁴ Hopkins’s main task, however, was to press Stalin on carrying out elections in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe as well as Austria, while emphasizing the lack of U.S. interest in the region. One should note, of course, that at this time American forces were suffering great losses in the war with Japan, but the cynicism of Truman’s note of May 22, 1945 to Hopkins, is striking. Truman instructed him to tell Stalin:

That Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (*sic*), Austria, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia et al., made no difference to U.S. interests only so far as World Peace is concerned. That Poland ought to have “free elections,” at least as free as [Frank] Hague, Tom Pendergast, Joe Martin or [Robert] Taft would allow in their respective bailiwicks... Uncle Joe should make some sort of gesture — whether he means it or not to keep before our public that he intends to keep his word. Any smart political boss will do that.²⁵

²³For NKVD documents, in Polish translation, on the kidnapping and interrogations of these leaders, their trial and the personal file of General Leopold Okulicki, see: Andrzej Chmielarz and Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, eds., *Proces szesnastu. Dokumenty NKWD [The Trial of the Sixteen. NKVD Documents]*, translated by Kazimierz Stembrowicz and Fryderyk Zbiniewicz, 2nd edition (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 1995).

²⁴Okulicki was probably murdered, but Jankowski died of ill health. The rest returned to Poland in 1945 and some participated in politics for a while. For a good, short, English language account of this period of Polish history, see Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943-1948*, translated and annotated by John Micgiel and Michael H. Bernhard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), chapter 4; see also Polonsky and Drukier, *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland*.

²⁵Cited by William Larsh, “Yalta and the American Approach to Free Elections in Poland,” *The Polish Review*, v. XL/3 (1995), p. 275, after Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 82.

Stalin finally agreed to the inclusion of Mikołajczyk as a Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture in the new Provisional Polish Government of National Unity [Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej, TRJN] not just due to U.S. pressure, but also because Mikołajczyk had recognized the Yalta agreements in late April 1945. His inclusion in the new government, established in Moscow on June 28, 1945, led to its recognition by the United States and Britain on July 5 of that year.²⁶ Free elections, however, were not yet in the offing.

Plokhy is right to state that “The Western delegates at Yalta had little choice but to accept the fact of preponderant Soviet power” (250). It should be noted, however, that Soviet military dominance over most of Eastern Europe by early February 1945 was mainly due to the absence of U.S. and British military power in that part of the world. This was, in turn, due the fact that neither the British nor the U.S. government viewed the region as an area of their vital interest. Indeed, the British and U.S. leaders had agreed at the First Quebec Conference (August-September 1943) that Eastern Europe was to be the Soviet theater of military operations and Churchill’s efforts to secure an Allied landing at the head of the Adriatic were directed at cutting the Red Army off from Austria and southern Germany, not Poland.²⁷ He hoped Poland would be independent and democratic, but was primarily interested in establishing an independent Greece, vital for British dominance in the Mediterranean and thus control of the Suez Canal, the shortest route to India. He also considered the Curzon Line as the best Polish-Soviet frontier. As for FDR, he had privately approved leaving the Baltic States and eastern Poland in the USSR as early as April 1942.²⁸ As noted earlier, his interest in Poland was governed by his concern with Polish-American voters, although he also believed that approval of the Big Three decisions on Poland by American public opinion was necessary for it to support U.S. participation in the United Nations.

Plokhy’s account of the Yalta Conference, as of the events that followed, is a balanced and very readable study. On the credit side, it should be noted that the author uses American, British as well as Russian books and documentary sources, including some recently published Russian

²⁶The Provisional Government of National Unity consisted of four political parties: the Peasant Party, the Polish Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Polish Workers’ Party, but it was dominated by the latter, [Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR], which, however, did not represent the workers of Poland.

²⁷ See Cienciala, “Great Britain and Poland,” *The Polish Review*, XL/ 3 (1995), pp. 281-314, and Cienciala, “The United States and Poland,” *The Polish Review*, LIV/2 (2009), pp. 190-191.

²⁸See *Navigating the Rapids, 1918-1971: From the Papers of Adolf A. Berle*, edited by Beatrice Bishop Berle and Travis Beal Jacobs (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 401.

documents.²⁹ The story is enlivened by quotations from the letters of Roosevelt's daughter, Anna Boetiger, who accompanied him, Churchill's daughter, Sarah Oliver, who came with her father, and the daughter of the U.S. ambassador to Moscow, Catherine Harriman, who had supervised the renovation of her father's quarters in the Livadia Palace before the conference. The author is also to be commended for including very good maps and an excellent photograph gallery (following p. 228), although without a list of photo credits. The book lacks a bibliography, which would have been most helpful both to specialists and others. It is, however, likely that both these shortcomings were due to the publisher, not the author.

On the debit side, there are some factual errors, misleading statements, and omissions. Aside from those mentioned earlier, several others should be noted. The British government did not "offer a safe haven to the Poles after the Polish defense collapsed" (158), but after the collapse of France, where they also fought the Germans. Mikołajczyk did not accept the Curzon Line during his stay in Moscow with Churchill in October 1944 (161), but promised the British Prime Minister that he would try to get the Polish government to accept it. This proved impossible, however, so he resigned in November 1944. Plokhy's statement that Mikołajczyk struggled to reconcile his government's demands with British and American interests and Poland's real defeat "with a vision of its grandeur" (160) is acceptable except for the last phrase. In fact, the Polish statesman tried to get his government to support a compromise (the Curzon Line except for Wilno/Vilnius and Lwów/Lviv). In the last stages of the Polish government's internal debate, he argued for the acceptance of Stalin's demands in order to hold free elections in Poland, which he expected the Polish Peasant Party to win. He also believed it was necessary to accept Stalin's demands in order to secure compensation in the west for Polish losses in the east.³⁰ It is true that both Polish and Ukrainian militias murdered each other's citizens on both sides of the Curzon Line (174), but these were revenge killings rather than "ethnic cleansing," the term used by Plokhy. This term should be applied to the organized murder of Poles in

²⁹S.V. Iurchenko, *Ialtinskaia Konferentsiia 1945 Goda: Khronika Sozdaniia Novogo Mira* [*The Yalta Conference of 1945: The Chronicle of Creating a New World*] (Simferopol: Mir, 2005), and Oleg A. Rzheshhevskii, ed., *Stalin i Cherkhill: Vstrechy, Besedy, Diskussii. Dokumenty, Kommentarii, 1941-1945* [*Stalin and Churchill: Meetings, Conversations, Discussions. Documents and Comments*] (Moscow: Nauka, 2004).

³⁰Cienciala, "Great Britain and Poland," *The Polish Review*, XL/3 (1995), pp. 292-293, and same "The Foreign Policy of the Polish Government-in-Exile, 1939-1945: Political and Military Realities versus Polish Psychological Reality" in: John S. Micgiel and Piotr S. Wandycz, eds., *Reflections on Polish Foreign Policy*, (New York: The East European Center, Columbia University, New York, and The Józef Piłsudski Institute, 2007), p. 121.

Volhynia, formerly in eastern Poland, not mentioned in this book. It was carried out by Stepan Bandera's faction of the Ukrainian Underground Army [Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armiya, UPA]. Here, Bandera's supporters murdered an estimated 50,000-60,000 Poles in 1943.³¹ Plokhy mentions Nikita S. Khrushchev's admission that the Poles formed almost the whole population of Lwów/Lviv in the summer of 1944, which is why Soviet authorities rushed there to prevent the Polish government-in-exile from taking over its administration (173). It would also be worth mentioning here that units of the Polish Armia Krajowa [Home Army] helped the Red Army to liberate the city — and were promptly arrested afterward. Polish civilian authorities were also ready to take over the administration, but were arrested as soon as they identified themselves. Most important of all, while Plokhy devotes much more attention to the Polish side of the story than other western authors of books on Yalta, he shows little understanding of the significance of the lands of former eastern Poland for Polish public opinion, both civilian and military. For them, it was not a question of sentimental memory or visions of grandeur; they saw Polish retention of these lands as synonymous with Polish independence and security from renewed Soviet domination. They also viewed the restoration of Poland, at least within its interwar borders, as elementary justice. This was not, of course, the view of the Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians, whose claims to former Polish territory were skillfully exploited by Stalin. When these peoples were, however, united in the expanded postwar Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian Soviet Republics, the Soviet dictator subjected them to renewed terror and deportations and they had to wait — along with Latvia and Estonia — almost fifty years for real independence which came with the collapse of the USSR. As for Poland, realistic Polish politicians, led by Mikołajczyk, accepted the new frontiers in the east and west, expecting free elections to bring the non-communists to power. As it turned out, however, the elections of January 27, 1947 were rigged to produce a communist victory. Mikołajczyk and some of his closest supporters, whose lives were threatened, managed to escape to the West where they carried on their struggle for an independent Poland. Most of them did not live to see the fall of Polish communism in 1989.

³¹Later, there was also Polish-Ukrainian fighting in former S.E. Poland (Eastern Galicia), where Polish Home Army [Armia Krajowa, A.K.] units often violated orders not to kill women and children. The UPA fought both the Soviets and the Poles, drawing support from the local Ukrainian population. This led to the forcible resettlement of the Ukrainians remaining in Poland to territories along the Baltic coast. For a recent study of the Volhynian massacres, see Timothy Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing: 1943," *PAST & PRESENT*, No. 179, May 2003, pp. 179-197; see also his article "To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943-1947," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 1/2 (1999), pp. 86-120.

The Yalta decisions were inevitable in the circumstances of the time, but the question remains: Did the Western leaders really expect Stalin to keep his word and allow free elections in Poland as well as all the liberated countries of Eastern Europe? Or did they just want I.O.U.s to show their own public at home and, of course, to preserve Allied unity until the defeat of Germany and then Japan? Whatever the case may be, Churchill's later protests and criticisms of Stalin's policy were meant to show that the fault lay with Stalin. Roosevelt died in April 1945, but his successor Harry Truman's note to Hopkins of May 22, 1945, probably reflected FDR's thinking on Eastern Europe. Finally, one can question whether the Yalta agreements on Poland and the Western leaders' *de facto* abandonment of Eastern Europe to Soviet domination, were really "the price of peace." There was, after all, no possibility of a "hot" war between the Allies in 1945, while the Cold War began not over the Soviet domination of Poland and most of Eastern Europe, but over Germany. Indeed, the long peace that followed Yalta was ensured by the readiness of the United States, first to stand by the Allied zone in Berlin (1947-1948) and thus by West Germany, and then to defend Western Europe against a Soviet or Soviet-led attack through NATO. The collapse of communism in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe in 1989-90, followed by the collapse of the USSR in late 1991, created a new situation which further ensured peace. It is yet to be seen, however, if the western members of the European Union and NATO will support the independence of the East European states against a serious Russian attempt to regain dominant influence over the region, or at least over Poland and the Baltic States.