



04.02.1945

4-11 February 1945. The Yalta Conference and its consequences

Between 4 and 11 February 1945, the Yalta Conference was the second meeting (after one in Tehran in 1943) of leaders of the Allied powers: Joseph V. Stalin – USSR, Franklin D. Roosevelt – USA, Winston S. Churchill – Great Britain. Contrary to some opinions that are spread within contemporary historiography, it did not mean ‘division of the world’ between Soviets and Anglo-Americans, but it also did not prevent evolutions which already took place to this end. The main objective of the conference was the regulation of some post-war issues, such as the situation of Germany at the end of the conflict and deciding war reparations that this country was to pay, regulation of the Soviet-Polish border and the composition of the Polish government, the structure of the future United Nations Organization, participation of the USSR in the war against Japan, etc. Although discussions in Yalta did not directly involve Romania, they had important consequences over the political situation in the country following the adoption of the ‘Declaration of Liberated Europe.’ This document, adopted at the proposal of the United States, mainly resumed the democratic principles previously mentioned in the Atlantic Charter, such as the ‘right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.’ The ‘Declaration’ also included some provisions which were prone to interpretation. Thus, Allied Powers manifested the intention to ‘assist’ countries formerly occupied or subordinated to Nazi Germany to step on to the path of democracy, intensifying the fight against the ‘last remnants of Nazi power and fascism’ and to support the formation of governments ‘representing all democratic elements of the population.’ These provisions were used by the Soviet Union to intervene in countries it controlled, both by labelling opposition parties as ‘fascist’ and by forming governments under Moscow’s influence. The first country in which the effects of the Yalta Conference were felt was Romania. The meeting of the ‘three greats’ had shown that, for London and Washington, the main preoccupation in Eastern Europe concerned Poland. Romania was not enjoying too much interest. As a consequence, after Yalta Stalin rushed to put into practice the 90 percent that had been attributed to him by the Agreement with Churchill regarding influence over Romania, as the British Prime Minister had begun as early as December 1944 to apply the agreement regarding Greece. Thus, Romanian communists – coordinated from Moscow – intensified their efforts in the period immediately after the conference to overthrow the government led by general Radescu and take over power. Alexandru Cretzianu noted during that this time that ‘[t]he action initiated by the Communist Party and its affiliates, at the beginning of February, greatly intensified after publication of the Yalta release. Attacks against General Radescu and Iuliu Maniu took the meanest forms of ill faith and the greatest violence. Communists were obviously supposed to act quickly and produce a situation creating an accomplished fact before application of the Yalta principles.’ In order to put into

practice Moscow's intentions, the Soviet deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Andrey Yanuaryevich Vyshinsky was sent on a second visit to Bucharest (27 February – 14 March 1945). To this end, the discussion of Vyshinsky with King Michael, in the evening of 27 February 1945, is especially relevant as the Romanian king appealed to the spirit of the Yalta agreements to defend democracy: 'Mr Vyshinsky declared to the king: It is true that only elections decide the real will of the people [...] but Your Majesty has to take a decision [the king was supposed to appoint, on Moscow's demand, the Groza government]. His Majesty: We must also take into account the Yalta decision [concerning free elections in a liberated Europe]. Mr Vyshinsky: The Yalta decision does not say anything about the Radescu government [...].' The meeting in which the King of Romania appealed to the Yalta spirit, to the fact that the Radescu government – made up of representatives from all parties – 'is in full conformity with Yalta decisions,' is broadly reported by Constantin Visoianu, a witness to all the talks King Michael I held with Moscow's envoy. The immediate consequence of applying the spirit of the Yalta agreement in Romania was the imposition by Moscow on 6 March 1945 of the pro-communist government led by Dr. Petru Groza, a government that would mark the beginning of a new stage on the path to the country's sovietisation and communisation.

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