

Casablanca Conference

Excerpt from *World War II: A Short History*

Hitler's decision to send troops to Tunisia was in one sense a blunder because of the sacrifice of so many soldiers. But it also lengthened the Allied operation in North Africa to such an extent that the British and Americans were unable to shift forces to Britain in time for a cross- [English] channel invasion in 1943. Churchill and Roosevelt actually confirmed this outcome when they met in a conference at Casablanca in January 1943 while the struggle for Tunisia was still far from complete. Roosevelt accepted Churchill's proposal that the Allies concentrate on additional offensive operations in the Mediterranean during 1943, specifically, an invasion of Sicily. In return, Churchill approved a massive buildup for a cross- [English] channel invasion in 1944.

Source: Lyons, Michael. World War II: A Short History. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004. Print. Adapted and Edited by the NC Civic Education Consortium

ROOSEVELT, CHURCHILL MAP 1943 WAR STRATEGY AT TEN-DAY CONFERENCE HELD IN CASABLANCA; GIRAUD AND DE GAULLE, PRESENT, AGREE ON AIMS

By DREW MIDDLETON Special Cable to The New York Times

CASABLANCA, French Morocco, Jan. 24 [1943] -- President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill today concluded a momentous ten-day conference in which they planned Allied offensives of 1943 aimed at what the President called the "unconditional surrender of the Axis powers."

The President flew 5,000 miles across the Atlantic with his Chiefs of Staff to confer with Mr. Churchill and British military, naval and air chieftains in a sun-splashed villa within sound of Atlantic breakers. Every phase of the global war was discussed in conferences lasting from morning until midnight. Both war leaders emphasized that the conference was wholly successful and that complete agreement had been reached on great military enterprises to be undertaken by the United Nations [Allied Powers] this year.

General Henri Honore Giraud, High Commander for French North Africa, and General Charles de Gaulle, leader of fighting in France, met at the conference and found themselves in accord on the primary task of liberating France from German domination. President Roosevelt predicted that French soldiers, sailors and airmen would fight beside the Allied armies in the liberation of France.

Stalin Kept Informed

The President and Mr. Churchill expressed regret for Premier Joseph Stalin's inability to leave the Russian offensive, which he is directing personally, but emphasized that all results of the conferences had been reported to the Soviet Leader. [Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek was similarly advised, The Associated Press reported.]

Assurance of future world peace will come only as a result of the total elimination of German and Japanese war power, the President declared. He borrowed a phrase from General Grant's famous letter to the Confederate commander at Forts Donelson and Henry -- "unconditional surrender" -- to describe the only terms on which the United Nations [Allied Powers] would accept the conclusion of the war.

He emphasized, however, that this did not mean the destruction of the populace of Germany, Japan and Italy, but the end of a philosophy based on the conquest and subjugation of other peoples in those countries.

The President saw three objectives before the United Nations in 1943.

The first of these is maintenance of the initiative won in the closing days of 1942, its extension to other theatres and an increase in those which the Allies now hold the upper hand.

Second, the dispatch of all possible aid to the Russian offensive must be maintained with the double objective of whittling down German manpower and continuing the attraction of German munitions and material on the Russian front.

Third, Mr. Roosevelt called for assistance for the Chinese armies, now in their sixth year of war, with Japanese domination ended forever.

Both Leaders Satisfied

To gain these objectives the military and political leaders of the United Nations [Allied Powers] are determined to pool all their resources, military and economic, in 1943 to maintain the initiative wherever it is now held and to seek every opportunity to bring the enemy to battle on terms as unfavorable as those now prevailing in Tunisia.

Both leaders were extremely satisfied at the successful conclusion of the fourth meeting between them since the beginning of the war. Cooperation between the American and British Chiefs of Staff was described by Mr. Roosevelt as the closest possible, with the military leaders living together and working as personal friends more than allies.

President Roosevelt predicted that the war would proceed according to schedule, with every indication that 1943 would be an even better year for the United Nations [Allied Powers] than 1942.

The conference, which probably made more important decisions than any other called by the United Nations [Allied Powers], was held in a lush tropical setting in conditions of greatest secrecy. A swimming pool in the back yard had been turned into an air raid shelter, but no German planes approached Casablanca during the conference, and if any had come they would have been greeted by squadrons of British and United States fighter planes flying guard over the region.

Talks Closely Guarded

Many acres of the resort were enclosed in two lines of barbed wire, on which tin cans were hung. If any one had been foolhardy enough to approach these lines he would have been riddled by bullets from machine guns or bayoneted by some of the hundreds of American infantrymen who stood helmeted atop roofs or patrolled the shady walks around the area.

Both the President and the Prime Minister seemed confident and satisfied when they appeared at the noon press conference today. The President wore a worn gray suit and the Prime Minister was dapper in a gray pin-stripe suit topped by a somewhat battered bray Homburg hat. The sunshine winked in a jeweled "V" and as American Distinguished Service Order bar in his lapel buttonhole.

The two unmilitary-looking men, who lead half of the strongest coalition in history, were accompanied by General de Gaulle and General Giraud. For the benefit of the camera, the two generals shook hands.

"A historic moment," President Roosevelt commented.

The sun beat fiercely on the group. Mr. Churchill asked the President, "Do you want a hat?"

"I was born without a hat," Mr. Roosevelt replied.

Mr. Roosevelt revealed that the Allied victories in North Africa had made his fourth meeting with Mr. Churchill necessary. The situation had been reviewed in the meeting and plans made for the next steps in 1943, he said.

Both he and Mr. Churchill expressed deep regret for Premier Joseph Stalin's inability to leave the Russian offensive which he is directing personally, but emphasized that all the results of the conference between the President and the Prime Minister and their Chiefs of Staff committees had been reported to the Soviet leader.

Mr. Churchill agreed with Mr. Roosevelt that the conference was unprecedented in history. Describing himself again as the President's ardent lieutenant, Mr. Churchill declared they worked together as partners and friends and described their cooperation as one of the sinews of war of the Allied powers.

The Prime Minister began to speak slowly, by gradually raised his voice as he described the frustration of the enemy by the men Adolf Hitler had called incompetents and drunkards. This brought a laugh. Mr. Churchill beamed.

The events in North Africa have altered the whole strategic aspect of the war, making the Germans and Italians fight under conditions of great difficulty, he declared. He described general Field Marshal Erwin Rommel as a fugitive from Libya and Egypt now trying to pass himself off as the liberator of Tunis. But he reminded the correspondents that General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery was hot on Marshal Rommel's trail and that everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go.

Purpose Is Unconquerable

Design, purpose and an unconquerable will lie behind all that is being done by Britain and America, the Prime Minister said solemnly. These will be applied to enforce unconditional surrender upon the criminals who plunged the world into the war, he concluded.

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0114.html#article>

Adapted and Edited by the NC Civic Education Consortium

Directions: Using the above documents, prior knowledge of World War II, and your textbook, answer the following questions as a group on a separate sheet of paper.

Presentation Focus Questions:

- 1) Who attended your conference?
- 2) Where was your conference held?
- 3) When was your conference held? (Be as specific as possible)
- 4) What were the terms of the agreement reached at your conference?
- 5) Why is your conference historically significant?

Group Discussion Questions

- 1) What is "unconditional surrender"?
- 2) Why do you think that the Allies decided to call for the Axis' "unconditional surrender"? Do you think that the results of World War I had an impact on this decision? Why or why not?
- 3) Why was Joseph Stalin unable to attend the conference?
- 4) What events influenced the decisions made by the Allies at the conference?
- 5) According to President Roosevelt, what were the three objectives before the Allies in 1943?
- 6) Why do you think the *New York Times* article neglected to mention the decision to invade Sicily?
- 7) Why do you think the reporter included the exchange between Churchill and Roosevelt regarding a hat?

Excerpt from *World War II: A Short History*

Throughout the summer and fall of 1941, America's role in support of Britain increased significantly. In April, US forces occupied the Danish territory of Greenland after an agreement with the Danish ambassador in Washington. In July, American troops also took over Iceland, another Danish possession. They relieved British troops, who had occupied the island soon after the German seizure of Denmark. Both Greenland and Iceland became bases from which US air and naval units could patrol the Atlantic.

In August, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met in a secret rendezvous, off the coast of Newfoundland. There they drafted the Atlantic Charter, which, as a joint declaration of policy by a belligerent power (or power fighting in the war) and a technically neutral nation, was a remarkable document. Its idealistic terms upheld the right of all peoples to choose their own governments, affirmed Anglo-American dedication to peace "after the final destruction of Nazi tyranny," and rejected any territorial aggrandizement -- gaining new territories -- as a result of the war. The Atlantic Charter was important because it symbolized growing Anglo-American solidarity. It also had propaganda appeal to the conquered peoples of Europe, encouraging them not to lose hope.

Source: Lyons, Michael. World War II: A Short History. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004. 147. Print. Adapted and Edited by the NC Civic Education Consortium

The Atlantic Charter

AUGUST 14, 1941

The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measure which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

Sources: <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>

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Images for the Atlantic Conference



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Group Discussion Questions

- 1) In what ways did the United States support the Allies despite being neutral?
- 2) How might the Atlantic Charter encourage the "conquered peoples of Europe" not to "lose hope"?
- 3) How do you think Nazi Germany responded to the Atlantic Charter?
- 4) Do you agree with the ideals set forth in the Atlantic Charter? Why or Why not?
- 5) Which section is most important and why?
- 6) In what ways has the Atlantic Charter been upheld by the United States in the post-World War II world?
- 7) In what ways has the Atlantic Charter been ignored by the United States in the post-World War II world?