

The atlantic charter churchill and roosevelt legendary meeting history essay



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August 8, 1941, the crew of Britain's newest battleship HMS Prince of Wales was cleaving her way at top-speed through the unrelenting heavy seas of the Atlantic to Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. Onboard this ship is British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, who had made the voyage across the Atlantic where President Roosevelt eagerly awaited the onset of discussions fateful to the outcome of the Second World War.

On August 9, 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met onboard the American cruiser U. S. S. Augusta anchored off the coast of Newfoundland. The discussion between the two leaders at the meeting would result in a joint declaration called the Atlantic Charter. It promptly created a critical alliance which supported Britain in its fight against the Nazi Regime. Subsequently the agreement established post-war goals for World War II and laid the groundwork for future international peacekeeping organizations.

Two years prior to the beginning of World War II in the spring of 1938, German speakers living in the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia began favoring for closer ties with Germany. Hitler began to support those requests and favored reclaiming the Sudetenland. He had recently annexed Austria into Germany and the conquest of Czechoslovakia was the next step in his plan of creating a "greater Germany" ("Sep 30, 1938"). Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was intent on averting war, although the Czechoslovak government hoped that Britain and France would offer assistance in the event of a German invasion ("Sep 30, 1938"). Chamberlain traveled twice to Germany to offer Hitler favorable agreements, but the German chancellor kept increasing his demands ("Sep 30, 1938"). International tension

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increased when Hitler began demanding the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia be under the control of the German government. In an attempt to resolve the crisis, Chamberlain met with the leaders of Germany, France, and Italy in Munich to discuss the terms of handling the Sudetenland. Within the early morning hours of September 30, 1938 Adolf Hitler of Germany, Benito Mussolini of Italy, Édouard Daladier of France, and Neville Chamberlain of Britain signed the Munich Pact, which sealed the fate of Czechoslovakia, virtually handing it over to Germany in the name of peace (" Sep 30, 1938").

The Munich Pact sacrificed the autonomy of Czechoslovakia on the pedestal of a very short peace term (" Sep 30, 1938"). The peace of the world only lasted eleven months before Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia in March of 1939 (Friedrich). In response to Hitler's violation of the Munich Agreement, Britain signed with Poland the Polish-British Common Defense Pact, which guaranteed the integrity of the Polish state. Chamberlain's decision to sign Poland after the dismemberment of the Czechoslovak state meant Britain, along with France were committed to protecting a nation where they had no common borders (" Invasion of Poland"). Reacting to the Anglo-Polish alliance, Hitler negotiated the German-Soviet Pact of August 1939, which made Poland partitioned between the two powers, enabled Germany to invade Poland without Soviet intervention (" Invasion of Poland"). On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and later on September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union invaded the eastern part of the country. Britain and France, standing by their guarantee declared war against Germany September 3, 1939 (" Invasion of Poland"). This was the beginning of World War II.

The Phony War was the label given to the period of time between September 1939 and 1940 when Britain and France had not fought in combat. For several months, German troops sat and waited while French forces held their defenses ("The Finest Hour"). The Phony War would come to an end on April 9, 1940 when Hitler began a successful attack on Denmark and Norway. Then on May 10, German troops launched a blitzkrieg attack on the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The German army was quickly advancing across Europe and would soon cross the line of fortifications that protected France. On June 10, 1940, Hitler's armies swept throughout the region of France with France's defeat only a matter of time, the country fell under Nazi control on June 22 ("The Finest Hour").

After the fall of France, Prime Minister Churchill faced the possibility of invasion coming from France, across the English Channel. Churchill amassed the British navy to stand between Hitler and England. In an attempt to demolish the Royal navy, Hitler turned to the Luftwaffe, Germany's air force, to destroy Britain's air defenses. The intense attack called the Battle of Britain would continue for three months where day after day as many as a thousand German airplanes dropped bombs within the city of London and Britain ("The Finest hour").

By the end of 1941, Britain had experienced a shortage of war materials that they were unable to pay for and was fatigued by the constant air raids from the Germans. Churchill, in favor for an alliance with the U. S., tried to communicate with Roosevelt to facilitate the sending of military supplies over to Britain ("The Finest hour"). Bounded by the Neutrality Act of 1939, the U. S. was not permitted to release arms to any warring country unless on <https://assignbuster.com/the-atlantic-charter-churchill-and-roosevelt-legendary-meeting-history-essay/>

“ cash and carry” terms (Decker and Chiei 2). Without antagonizing the isolationist who wanted to keep the U. S out of international affairs, Roosevelt constructed the Lend-Lease Act, a bill that empowered the president to “ sell, transfer title to, lend, lease, or dispose of [articles of defense to] the government of any country the President deems vital to the defense of the United States”. The Lend-Lease Act provided the British with planes, tanks, guns, artillery, and ammunition without them paying for it. Bypassing the legislation would prove critical to sustaining U. S. allies and would be necessary for continued preparation for what appeared to be the inevitable involvement of the U. S. in WWII (Decker and Chiei 2).

Throughout 1940 and 1941, Churchill attempted to win the confidence of Americans by demonstrating his trust in them. Roosevelt’s presidential advisors Averell Harriman and Harry Hopkins were invited by Churchill to meet Britain’s highest military leaders (“ The Finest Hour”). Broad- ranging talks would consolidate policy during the meetings (Robbins). Outlining his views on strategy to win the American alliance in the war, Churchill reassured his guests “ that the Japanese would not enter the war until they were sure that we were beaten. They did not want to fight the United States and the British Empire together” (qtd. in “ The Finest Hour”). The roaring advance of Hitler’s Nazi army had widened the war rapidly and Hitler’s attack on Russia had created the need for a Roosevelt-Churchill summit meeting (Robbins). Roosevelt planned for a meeting between the two leaders that was privately held off the coast of Newfoundland. The President objective for the meeting was to cement relations with Britain and to discuss terms on the

Lend-Lease Act. Churchill's objective was to draw the U. S. into WWII and secure more help for the British (" Behind Closed Doors").

Boarding the British battleship HMS Prince of Wales on August 4, 1941, Churchill proceeded on his voyage to meet with the President. Cruising through malignant waters of the Atlantic Ocean filled with enemy submarines and raiders shrugged off the dangers and continued to toil away at official papers and increasing Roosevelt's support for the war (Robbins). Churchill's departure was kept at utmost secrecy to outmaneuver Hitler's Kriegsmarine. While Churchill's whereabouts were kept hidden, however, because the Americans were still at peace, presidential locations were fully located. The White House told the nation that Roosevelt was enjoying a fishing holiday onboard the Presidential yacht Potomac. Once Roosevelt left the surveillance of the nation, he joined the U. S. S Augusta and continued his voyage to Placentia Bay under the shield of planes and destroyers (Robbins).

The destiny of the world would depend on the effectiveness of the policies agreed by Winston and Churchill. After the attack on Russia by the Germans on June 22, 1941, Churchill immediately aligned with the Russians and arranged the signing of a pact to provide possible aid. On August 9, 1941, Churchill met Roosevelt onboard the U. S. S. Augusta, anchored off the coast of Newfoundland in Placentia Bay. This would mark the beginning of high-level collaborations that would continue until the end of the war (" The Finest Hour").

During the meeting at Newfoundland, there was a discussion on a strategy to block the anticipated military moves of Hitler and Mussolini. Those present at the meeting felt that combined American and British staff had enough to outwit the axis dictators, though a round table alliance was scarcely the type of structure Hitler was likely to employ with Rome and Tokyo (Robbins). Future moves for the war were coordinated at the meeting to ensure that Hitler's despotism was destroyed. The issue of the Far East and Japan had to be taken care of, also including the issue of Vichy France and the best means of keeping the French battleships out of German hands (Robbins). The stature of the meeting was manifest in the way the two leaders came together for Sunday service on the battleship Prince of Wales. A symbolic moment at war took place when military leaders and sailors of both nations mingled together to sing hymns that Churchill had selected ("The finest Hour").

On the last day of the meeting Roosevelt and Churchill issued the Atlantic Charter, which expressed a commitment to the principles of self governance and freedom for every country, called for the "destruction of the Nazi tyranny," and looked forward to free trade, cooperation, and peace among all nations. The post-war goals the leaders discussed became points laid out in the charter that were for the betterment of the world: (1) Countries shall not seek territorial gain, (2) If the citizens or governing government do not approve of territorial gain, then there shall be none, (3) The rights of people should be respected and not deprived from them, (4) Economic prosperity and trade should Endeavour between the two countries, (5) Collaboration between nations of improved labor standards, economic prosperity, and

social security, (6) After WWII, hopes to see established worldwide peace and people have the freedom of speech, (7) If such peace is achieved, then people should be able to be free to move around the world without intervention, (8) All the nations of the world should abandon the use of weapons. ("Atlantic Charter"). In London September 24, 1941, the delegate of the ten allied nations including the Soviet Union proclaimed allegiance to the Atlantic Charter.

U. S. neutrality ended December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Hitler declared war and the U. S. inevitably entered WWII, along with its allies Britain and Russia.

During WWII, although Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin were allies, tensions arose between the great three leaders. The glue that held the Anglo-American-Soviet alliance together during the war was the determination to defeat Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and Japan's military government reaching for control of East Asia ("Uneasy Allies"). The leaders held discreet aims for their respective countries that were in conflict with each other, though by temporary muting their differences they allowed their alliance to survive.

Debate arose concerning from the first point of the Atlantic Charter; Countries shall not seek territorial gain. A key issue was Roosevelt's mistrust of Britain's imperial ambitions. The question was asked "Would Britain give up its Nations of Commonwealth in order to comply with the standard of the charter?". Britain had imperialistic motives and Roosevelt did not agree with them, he saw the charter as a solution to end it ("BBC"). Declarations two and four of the charter laid the foundations for granting of independence to

Britain's colonial empire which began as early as 1947. Meanwhile another <https://assignbuster.com/the-atlantic-charter-churchill-and-roosevelt-legendary-meeting-history-essay/>

territorial issue was brewing with one of the Allies. Stalin's ideological post-war degrees about control over nations increased tensions between himself and Churchill. At the Teheran meeting, Churchill and Stalin made percentage agreements over how much each nation should control Europe. An agreement was never reached and this has proved to have caused strained tensions against the Soviet Union for attempting to spread communist rule around Eastern Europe ("Uneasy Allies").

Today, we see proof of the Atlantic Charter's lasting impact when people of free nations try and collaborate to try to rescue those victimized by tyrants. The goals laid out by President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill at that diplomatic meeting in August 1941 has laid the foundation of peacekeeping organizations, that strive to keep at equal human rights. Organizations such as the U. N and NATO have sprung from the principles of the charter, created nearly six decades ago, its intent still worthwhile today. The alliance forged at Placentia Bay between two great leaders would prove to be successful in defeating the Nazi Regime and keeping worldwide peace.