

**February 23, 1945**  
**Hugh Dalton Diary Entry Concerning Meeting of  
Churchill with Junior Ministers**

**Citation:**

"Hugh Dalton Diary Entry Concerning Meeting of Churchill with Junior Ministers",  
February 23, 1945, Wilson Center Digital Archive, The Second World War Diary of Hugh  
Dalton. 1940-1945, edited by Ben Pimlott.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/123358>

**Summary:**

Hugh Dalton discusses Churchill's impressions of the Yalta Conference.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Transcript - English

Entry for 23 February 1945,  
Concerning Meeting of Churchill with Junior Ministers.

He gave a vivid picture of Yalta. The Russians had made a tremendous effort to prepare for their reception in two of the old palaces of the nobility of Tsarist times. Everywhere all around was destruction. One day a British officer had asked for a lemon and had been given, with great apologies, an orange. Next day there appeared two lemon trees, each covered with ripe fruit, which were rapidly erected in a flower bed outside the palace where the soldiers were staying. The P.M. spoke very warmly of Stalin. He was sure - and Sir Charles Portal had said the same thing to me at the De La Rue dinner last Wednesday - that, as long as Stalin lasted, Anglo-Russian friendship could be maintained.<sup>[1]</sup> Who would succeed him one didn't know. (Portal had said, 'Perhaps Molotov. He's pretty wooden and he stammers and a stammer in Russian is not a pretty sound.') Several times, when we had pressed our points hard, Stalin had suddenly said, 'Yes. I see the strength of your argument. I will withdraw my proposal.' This had come quite suddenly, when things had not looked favorable to agreement. This was the right way to deal with the Russians. The Americans did not always recognize this. Sometimes they failed to press their points hard enough. All three were agreed that they must meet alone without the French. The Russians, in particular, were very insistent that France had not earned her right to join the Big Three. Stalin measured everything by the number of troops, ships and aircraft each of the Allies put in the field. On this count France was nowhere. The Americans take the same line. We, of the three, were the most favorable to France and we had secured for her considerable gains - a zone of occupation in Germany, a place on the International Allied Control Commission at Berlin, a place among the inviting powers for the San Francisco Conference. On the Dumbarton Oaks difficulty about voting, the P.M. thought that we had reached a pretty good compromise. (This will soon be fully explained, and much discussed by all those interested in international political organization.) The P.M. had finally persuaded Stalin to accept by illustrating it from our position [over] Hong Kong. If the Chinese clamored to have it back we should be compelled to allow discussion, and permit the Chinese to state their case and others to express their views upon it. We should have no right to stop any of this, or any recommendations made by any Committee which might be appointed to consider it, but if, after all this, we refused to budge, and the Chinese attacked us and tried to turn us out, they would then have become the aggressors. He said that this illustration had made a great impression upon Stalin. There had also been the question of the Russian representation at future conferences of the World Organization. The Russians had begun by asking for eighteen seats, one for each of their constituent republics. But we had resisted this, though still claiming six seats for the British Empire, which he confessed had struck him, secretly, as rather tall, as against one each for Russia and the U.S.A. Finally we and the Russians agreed that we would keep six and they might have three, including one for the Ukraine and one for White Russia, with a promise never to claim any more. The Americans didn't much like this, but he urged them to try to find some way of having three themselves. Possibly someone from the Senate and someone from the House of Representatives in addition to an official spokesman of the Administration. Roosevelt was going to think this over.

Poland had been much the most difficult question. On this the Big Three had felt more keenly than on anything else which they discussed. After each had stated their opposition, there had been a silence for two or three minutes. Finally an agreement had been arrived at ... Stalin, in the course of the talk on this, had said, 'We are conscious of our great sins against Poland in the past, through occupation and oppression of that country.' The P.M. wasn't sure whether 'sins', the actual word used by the translator, had been quite accurate, but in any case he thought this phrase very significant. No one could tell whether the pledge to make a truly free and independent Poland would be honored by the Russians or not. We and the Americans would do our best to see that it was. If not, we should be free to continue to recognize the London-Polish government and to refuse approval of the new Polish situation. As regards the taking over of territory previously German, he said that people often spoke of the great difficulties of 'transfer of population', but, in fact, most of the

Germans in the territories now taken by the Russians had 'run away already' and this problem would be much easier in practice than had been supposed. He attached great importance to penciled meetings of the Foreign Secretaries now agreed to and to the undertaking of the Three Great Powers to act together in peace as in war. On the way home he had seen, at Cairo, Ibn Saud<sup>[2]</sup> who had never before been outside Saudi Arabia and who had made it clear, when invited by Roosevelt to meet him, that he would not come to Cairo unless he was also going to meet the P.M. ...

<sup>[1]</sup> Marginal insertion: 'P.M. said, "Poor Neville Chamberlain believed he could trust Hitler. He was wrong. But I don't think I'm wrong about Stalin."'

<sup>[2]</sup> Abdul Aziz II Ibn Saud (1880-1953). Ruler of the newly formed Saudi Arabian Kingdom 1932-53.