

IN THE HANDS OF ROOSEVELT:  
STANISLAW MIKOLAJCZYK AND THE WASHINGTON MEETINGS  
JUNE 6-14, 1944

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## Prologue

Stanislaw Mikolajczyk arrived in Washington D.C. on June 6, 1944- D-Day. It was a momentous date for the Allied forces in World War II as the United States and Great Britain landed nearly 180,000 troops on the beaches of Normandy. June 6 was also a momentous date for Stanislaw Mikolajczyk and the Polish people; it ended the year long struggle to bring their cause to the attention of the United States.

As the Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile, Mikolajczyk had struggled for years to secure, and then maintain, his country's independence. Mikolajczyk had fought with the Polish Army against the Germans in WWI and again against the Russians in the Polish-Soviet war of 1920. As a long standing member of the Polish Peasant Party, Mikolajczyk climbed the party's ranks to become vice-chairman of its executive committee in 1935. A strong supporter of democratic principles and civil rights, Mikolajczyk won the party's presidency in 1937. When Germany attacked Poland in September of 1939 he escaped to London where he joined Wladyslaw Sikorski's Polish government-in-exile.

Now the Polish Premier, Mikolajczyk was in Washington to visit the most powerful man in the world- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the leader of the United States and of the Allied coalition arrayed against Nazi Germany and militant Japan. Mikolajczyk knew when he arrived in the United States that the fate of his nation and his people were in the hands of Roosevelt. The President of the United States either could save Poland or sacrifice it. As he prepared to meet Roosevelt at the White House on June 7, he undoubtedly thought back on how Poland had come to this state of affairs.

The Backdrop  
1939-1944

In the spring of 1939 Adolph Hitler's designs on Eastern Europe became apparent to the world's western leaders. Poland, located between Germany and the Soviet Union, eager to protect its boundaries from its powerful enemy, turned to both Great Britain and France for assistance. Neville Chamberlain, Britain's Prime Minister, in an attempt to deter Hitler from attacking Poland proffered the leaders of Poland an unconditional guarantee. Great Britain, he promised, would do everything possible to contest an attack by Germany on Poland.<sup>1</sup> However, Great Britain was unprepared to back up any guarantees made to Eastern Europe. In 1939 England's ships, planes and troops were not prepared to go to war; Chamberlain gambled that his guarantee to Poland would be enough to discourage Hitler from invading the country. Hitler, however, was prepared to call Chamberlain's bluff. On April 28, 1939, Germany renounced the Polish-German declaration of non-aggression signed in January 1934. It was obvious that Hitler was clearing any obstacles in his way. A German attack on Poland seemed inevitable.

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 431.

Poland's eastern neighbor, the Soviet Union and its leader, Joseph Stalin, saw no need to interfere on the behalf of Poland. Stalin was more intent on making sure the Soviet Union's own interests were protected. Chamberlain attempted to persuade Stalin to proceed with diplomatic talks with Great Britain, but the Soviet leader entered into negotiations with both Chamberlain and Hitler. Stalin knew that the Soviet Union was not immediately threatened by Germany; it did not share a border with the country and the German armies had to pass through Poland and Romania before reaching Soviet Russia. In addition, Stalin was aware that the western powers had already guaranteed the protection of Poland and Romania. This gave him the upper hand in his negotiations with London. However, although Stalin dealt with both Germany and Great Britain throughout the summer of 1939, he concluded that Soviet Russia's interests were best served by allying itself with Germany.

Stalin chose to align his country with Germany for two overriding reasons: Hitler agreed to recognize large areas of East Europe as a Soviet sphere of influence, and he promised to start a war with England and France, thus precipitating the inter-capitalist war on which Stalin had



been banking.<sup>2</sup> Desperate to avoid a Nazi-Soviet alliance, Great Britain pleaded with the Polish government to allow their country to fall under Stalin's "sphere of influence" in a possible pact. The Poles, refusing to give up half their country to the USSR "in order to become allies,"<sup>3</sup> rejected the offer. Stalin probably would not have accepted any offer, but in any event, he elected to negotiate a treaty with Hitler. Consequently, the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 22, 1939, materialized. Stalin sent his Prime Minister, V.M. Molotov to meet with Germany's Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop. The result was the 1939 non-aggression pact, or the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact called for Germany and the Soviet Union to refrain from attacking one another, to exchange all vital information, and to settle problems by arbitration. Furthermore, in a secret protocol, the two countries divided parts of East Europe into two separate spheres of influence. Nazi Germany secured the western half of Poland while Soviet Russia annexed the eastern half

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis J. Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 98. According to Dunn, war between Great Britain and France would check German aggression against the Soviet Union.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 432.

inhabited by some thirteen million Polish people.<sup>4</sup> Also included for the Soviet Union in the secret protocol were the oil rich cities of Bialystok and Lwow, Poland. Eight days later, on September 1, 1939, Hitler seized the moment and sent his armies to attack Poland.

Although the Polish people mounted valiant defensive operations against their Nazi aggressors, the German military machine proved too great for the Polish armies. Polish industrial and transportation centers were demolished, as were Polish troop concentrations, air bases, and major cities. Seven hundred and seventy Polish aircraft, half of which were under repair, were left to carry out anti-craft defenses against Germany's 2,600 superior planes. Cities and towns were attacked by dive bombers, creating chaos and mass flights to the east among the Polish population. The Poles were certain that Germany's attack would lead to an immediate response from Great Britain and France; however, Britain and France failed to deliver the massive air assistance they had promised.<sup>5</sup> Poland was alone.

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<sup>4</sup> Pitor Wandycz, *The United States and Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 238; Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 99. Also included in the Soviet sphere were Estonia, Latvia, and Finland. Bessarabia was recognized as an area in which the Soviets had an interest.

<sup>5</sup> A.J. Drexel Biddle, Jr., *Poland and the Coming of the Second World War: The Diplomatic Papers of Biddle, United States Ambassador to Poland 1937-1939* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1976) 31.

In a last maneuver to avoid world war, Neville Chamberlain delivered a four hour ultimatum to Berlin on September 3: German armies should withdraw from the invaded areas or both France and Great Britain would honor their obligations to Poland. No answer from Hitler was forthcoming. Even though Chamberlain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, Poland was forced to take the brunt of the first Nazi attack alone. The Nazis' September campaign against Poland was too severe for the nation to survive. By October, Poland ceased to exist as an independent country.

Eager to claim his half of Poland, Stalin began a public relations campaign in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* claiming that Russia could no longer remain indifferent to the conditions in Poland. In addition, Molotov sent a telegram to the Polish government stating that because their administration had disintegrated and because Warsaw was no longer the capital of Poland, any agreements concluded between the USSR and Poland ceased to operate. "Left to her own devices...Poland has become a suitable field for all manner of hazards and surprises, which may constitute a threat to the USSR."<sup>6</sup> Molotov also stated that the Soviet Union could no longer ignore their kindred Ukrainians and White Russians who were "at the mercy of fate... and

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<sup>6</sup> Edward J. Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern In Poland* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1958), 33.

defenseless."<sup>7</sup> Consequently, on September 17, under the guise of helping his brethren in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, Stalin sent his Red Army into Poland; they stopped only when they reached the north-south meeting line agreed upon by Molotov and Ribbentrop.

A few hours after the Soviet offensive, the Polish government, including President Wladyslaw Raczekiewicz, Prime Minister Wladyslaw Sikorski, and Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, were forced to flee Poland through Yugoslavia, Italy and Romania.<sup>8</sup> After an initial stay in France, the new Polish government-in-exile established itself in London. Recognition came quickly from the United States and Great Britain. Nevertheless, the partition of Poland was complete. With the Nazis occupying the western half of the country, and the Red Army occupying the east, the collapse of Poland was inevitable. Germany occupied approximately 72,866 square miles of Poland, while Stalin's Russia controlled 77,620 square miles, or 51.6% of the entire Polish territory.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Karski, *The Great Powers and Poland 1919-1945* (New York: The University Press of America, 1985), 380.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 392.

## Poland's Eastern Frontier

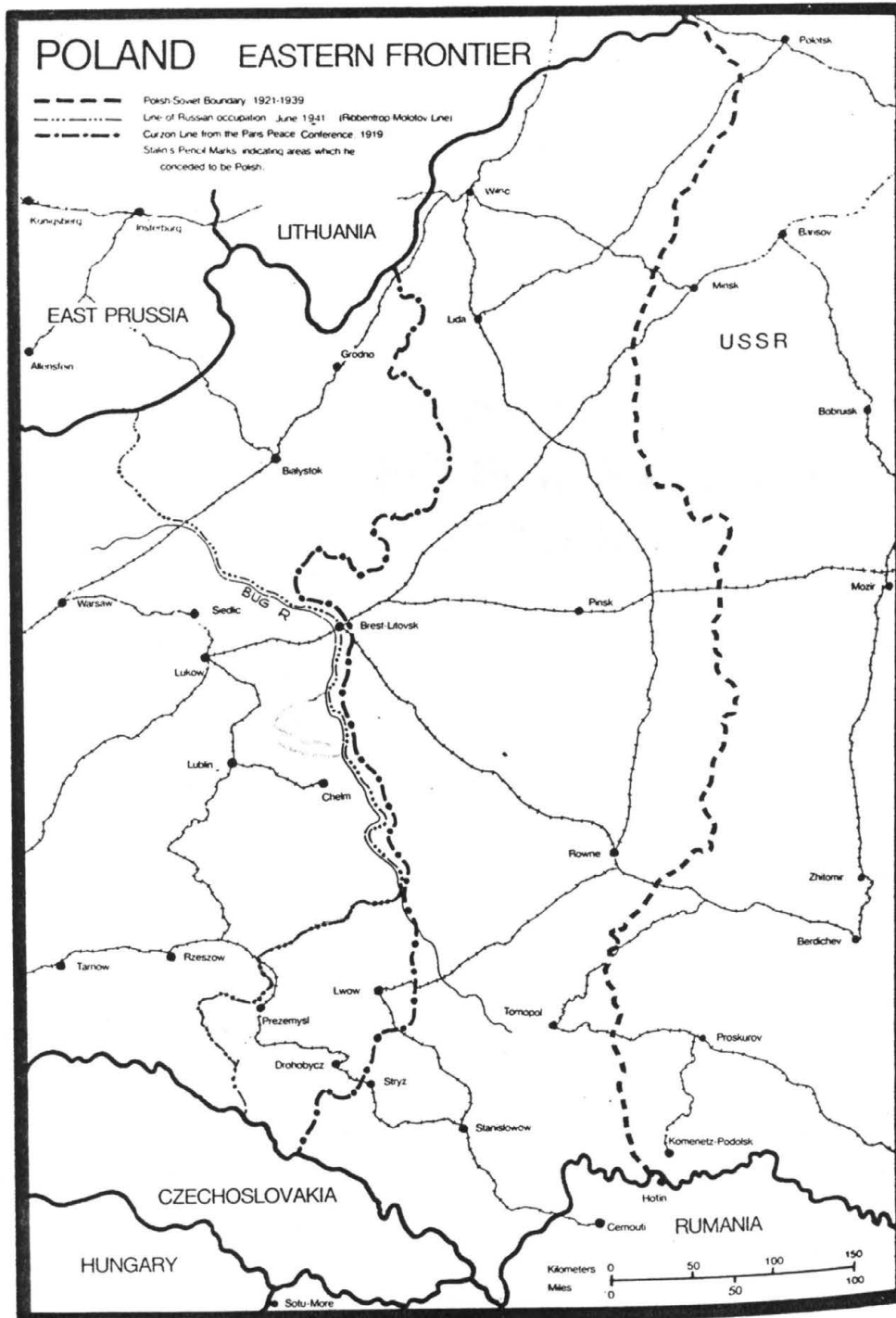


Fig. 1. The Polish-Soviet borders beginning in 1919 with the Curzon line, and extending through 1941 and the Russian occupation of Poland. Source: Keith Eubank, *Summit at Teheran* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1985), 518.

On September 28, 1939 the Soviets and Nazis agreed to modify the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Stalin turned over the bulk of Poland to Germany, keeping only the most eastern parts, and received in exchange the right to take Lithuania.<sup>10</sup> The new Soviet-Polish border was almost identical to the so-called Curzon line. Recommended in 1920 by the British foreign minister, Lord Curzon, the line was an attempt to settle the Soviet-Polish war of 1920-1921.<sup>11</sup> In the part of Poland which they continued to occupy after September 28, the Soviets imposed all the of the traditional characteristics of communist rule.

The traditional characteristics of communist rule took many forms in Poland. Mass deportations of all "anti-Soviet elements" began; these "elements" included administrative officials, police, judges, lawyers, Parliament members, retired military officers and priests.<sup>12</sup> Communist ideology became the major instruction at all Polish schools and most Polish teachers were replaced by native Russians. Policies both in the schools and government became anti-Polish and pro-Ukrainian and pro-Byelorussian.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 99.

<sup>11</sup> Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1991), 28. The Curzon line followed closely along the Molotov-Ribbentrop line with only small deviations to the west.

<sup>12</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

As a result of Soviet actions in Poland, relations between the Soviet Union and Poland throughout 1940 remained in turmoil. Poles around the world declared that the Soviet occupation of their country was as illegal as the German occupation. Polish citizens remained fully aware of Stalin's betrayal of their country and pressed their government to look into the fate of the one million Poles deported by the Soviet police to the interior of Siberia.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the two governments remained sharply divided.

June 22, 1941, completely changed the fate of Soviet Russia and Poland when Hitler's armies attacked the Soviet Union. Suddenly, Stalin found himself in a precarious position. Overnight the Soviet Union became allied with Great Britain and faced the possibility of a renewed alliance with Poland. The Poles remained reluctant to conclude any treaty with the Soviet leader. But despite their misgivings, the London government needed Russian help for their underground armies still fighting in Poland. The Poles also wanted to develop contact with the Polish army officers and citizens that the Soviets captured in 1939. These concerns led Poland to sign the Sikorski-Maisky treaty of July 19, 1941.

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<sup>14</sup> George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 199.

Signed by Stalin's ambassador to the Polish Government, Ivan Maisky and Poland's Prime Minister, General Wladyslaw Sikorski, the new treaty detailed several significant issues. The Sikorski-Maisky pact called for the formation of a Polish army on Soviet soil, the liberation of all Polish political and military prisoners, Soviet recognition of the Polish Government in London, and the revocation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939.<sup>15</sup> The most important issue in the eyes of the Polish government, the question of Poland's eastern borders with the Soviet Union, was not addressed in the Sikorski-Maisky agreement. The two governments simply could not agree on a frontier line. Sikorski demanded the acknowledgment of pre-war Soviet-Polish frontiers but Maisky refused. Stalin claimed that the revised Molotov-Ribbentrop line was Russia's natural claim to Polish lands and insisted that no frontier settlement could be reached as long as Sikorski rejected either the Molotov-Ribbentrop border or the Curzon line.<sup>16</sup> Insisting on equating security with territory, Stalin argued Poland was the corridor through which Germany invaded his country time and time again and that the only way to check the Germans

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<sup>15</sup> George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (Boston: Boston, Little and Brown, 1967), 201.

<sup>16</sup> Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule*, 28.



was for the USSR to have a forward defense in Poland.<sup>17</sup> The Poles, in what would be the first of many rejections of the Curzon line, spurned Maisky's suggestion. In the end, the issue of boundaries was omitted from the 1941 pact.

The face of the war changed on December 7, 1941, when Japan launched a surprise attack on the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii. Under the cover of darkness 360 Japanese planes targeted American battleships in the harbor. After nearly two hours, 18 American ships were either sunk or damaged and 3700 servicemen were wounded. On December 8 President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked for, and received from Congress, a Declaration of War. Suddenly, Great Britain, Soviet Russia and the United States were allies against the Axis powers. Poland could now look to Roosevelt for aid.

America's entrance into the war, however, did not help the growing tensions between Sikorski's government and Stalin. Soviet-Polish relations remained precarious in 1942. Although the Poles realized that the alliance with the Soviet Union was necessary, they nevertheless remained distrustful of Stalin. One particular debate between the two governments concerned the Polish citizens and army officers who were deported to Russia after the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939. Furthermore, a large number of Polish

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<sup>17</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 15.

citizens on Russia's side of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line had been drafted into the Red Army.<sup>18</sup> Although the Polish Embassy spent months attempting to locate their missing citizens, soldiers, and officers, Soviet officials claimed that all prisoners had been released from both prisons and labor camps. Stalin himself assured the Polish government that the missing Poles had escaped across the vast interior of Siberia and into Manchuria. This idea seemed ridiculous to Sikorski, who claimed not one of the missing men, if they had reached Manchuria, had attempted to contact the Polish authorities.<sup>19</sup> The whereabouts of the missing Poles would continue to plague the already fragile Soviet-Polish relationship.

The missing Poles were not the only problems affecting Polish-Soviet relations in 1942. Once again, the dispute over boundaries threatened to sever the 1941 pact. In December of 1942 Sikorski met with President Roosevelt in order to discuss Poland's growing boundary dispute with Russia. Sikorski asked for Roosevelt's support for Poland's pre-war borders with the Soviet Union; however, Roosevelt did not guarantee America's support. In a statement he would repeat throughout 1943 and 1944, Roosevelt stated that it

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<sup>18</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Louis Fischer, *The Road to Yalta: Soviet Foreign Relations 1941-1945* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 81.

was not possible under the American Constitution for the President of the United States to guarantee the borders of any foreign country.<sup>20</sup> Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, in an effort to compromise, pleaded with the Polish Ambassador in the United States, Jan Ciechanowski, to bargain with the Soviets on the issue of Poland's eastern territory. Ciechanowski refused Welles's request on the grounds that the Polish government-in-exile would lose its authority if "...it were to agree to make any territorial concessions."<sup>21</sup> Once again, the border issue remained unresolved.

The other difficulty facing Polish-Soviet relations was the provision in the Sikorski-Maisky agreement calling for a Polish army to be formed on Soviet soil. Regarding this part of the pact, Sikorski's government pleaded with the Soviets to release the 15,000 Polish officers still believed to be in Russia.<sup>22</sup> When confronted about the location of the missing officers, Stalin professed that all the officers in the Soviet Union had been released. Then, on April 13, 1943, a German radio program announced the discovery in the Katyn Forest of mass graves containing Polish army officers. The announcement from Germany placed the blame on the Soviets,

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<sup>20</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Jan Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1947), 152.

<sup>22</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 29.

but the Russian reply on April 15 claimed the mass graves were archeological excavations.<sup>23</sup> In order to discover the truth about Katyn, the Polish government-in-exile appealed to the International Red Cross to investigate. Unfortunately for the London Poles, the Germans also issued an invitation to the organization on the same day. The reaction from the Soviets was swift and severe. Accusing Sikorski's government of affirming Nazi propaganda, *Pravda* announced that the London government had directly assisted the Nazis by appealing to the International Red Cross. *Pravda* declared that the Polish government had swallowed a "baited hook" thrown out by the German propaganda agencies.<sup>24</sup> Using Katyn as a pretext the Soviets broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government in London on April 24, 1943. The presumed collaboration between the Poles and Nazis became Stalin's primary issue. The question of how the officers had died or their location if they had survived, was avoided by the Soviet government. The Poles, unconvinced by the Soviet archeological site theory, were certain that the Soviets were guilty of the crimes.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 32

<sup>25</sup> Diane Shaver Clemons, *Yalta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 15. The Soviet Union would admit under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990 that the Soviet secret police were indeed responsible for the atrocities at Katyn.

However, despite the break in relations between Poland and the USSR, Stalin continued to claim he wanted a strong and independent post-war Poland.<sup>26</sup> The United States and Great Britain, pleased with Stalin's statements and afraid of antagonizing their ally, dismissed Sikorski's fears that Stalin was lying. Furthermore, the United States and Great Britain attempted to persuade Sikorski to agree to Stalin's new demands concerning Poland. Growing bolder in his conditions, Stalin insisted that Sikorski dismiss Poles in his cabinet who were "unfriendly" to the Soviet Union. In fact, Stalin demanded that a new Polish government be reconstructed to favor pro-Moscow Poles.<sup>27</sup> "Without the fundamental improvement in the composition of the Polish government," Stalin stated, "it is impossible to expect any amelioration."<sup>28</sup> Sikorski refused. Stalin, however, went ahead with his own plans for a "friendly" Polish government.

Throughout the spring of 1943 the Soviets began preparing the ground for a Polish government sympathetic to the Communist cause. A convention of the Polish Patriots, held in Moscow, condemned the Polish government-in-exile and promised to fight hand in hand with the Red Army. Polish war

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<sup>26</sup> *New York Times*, 4 May 1943, p.5.

<sup>27</sup> Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 228.

<sup>28</sup> Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, vol. 2, *Alliance Forged: November 1942-February 1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 704.

prisoners, who had not been allowed to leave Russia, were drafted in a new communist-controlled Polish Army. Furthermore, propaganda flooded Poland citing the existence of several communist organizations whose names closely resembled existing patriotic underground groups.<sup>29</sup> Stalin's attempts to install a communist government in Poland became more and more persistent as the war progressed.

Poles everywhere were once again disheartened, when on July 4, 1943, Wladyslaw Sikorski was killed in a mysterious plane crash over Gibraltar. In a speech to the House of Commons on July 6, 1943, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called Sikorski a "man of remarkable pre-eminence" who held the firm conviction that a better Europe would emerge from WWII in which "a great and independent Poland will play an honorable part."<sup>30</sup> Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, forced to carry on Sikorski's quest for a free and independent Poland, promised Churchill that he would continue Sikorski's policy of normalizing relations with the USSR while maintaining support of the United States and Great Britain. Stalin, however, made "normalizing relations" a difficult task.

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<sup>29</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 135. Groups included the "Non-Party Democrats", "The People's Guard", "Committee of National Initiative", and the "Polish Workers' Socialist Party."

<sup>30</sup> Robert James Rhodes, *Winston Churchill: His Complete Speeches Vol.7 1943-1949* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), 6803-6804.

By the summer of 1943 the border controversy was again raised by Stalin. Momentous victories by the Red Army placed Stalin in a better bargaining position with Poland and its allies. In short, Stalin no longer needed a diplomatic relationship with Mikolajczyk. In fact, Stalin, Molotov and Maisky had all independently stated at sometime between December 1941 and March 1943 that the Curzon line, with minor modifications, would be a satisfactory basis for a frontier settlement.<sup>31</sup> Churchill, realizing Poland's grave situation, urged Mikolajczyk to quickly settle matters with Stalin before the Teheran Conference in November.

The Teheran conference was the first of the wartime summit conferences between Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt. In what would become a momentous occasion for Poland, the leaders met to decide war strategy as well as to discuss the post-war world. Mikolajczyk, eager to see Poland fairly represented, asked to meet with Churchill and Roosevelt before Teheran to discuss Poland's stance. Churchill refused, claiming that any meeting between himself and Mikolajczyk might prompt Stalin to back out. Roosevelt, too, refused to meet the Polish Premier. However, he again assured Mikolajczyk that he had made an extensive study of

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<sup>31</sup> Anthony Eden, *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon: The Reckoning* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 380-381.

the Polish situation and was fully prepared to present Poland's case at the meeting with Stalin.<sup>32</sup>

Poland's fate, however, rested with an unyielding Soviet leader. At Teheran, Stalin reiterated his demands of the Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet boundary, and the reorganization of the Polish government. The line drawn by Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, according to Stalin, returned Ukrainian soil to Ukraine and White Russian soil to White Russia; the line, he stated, "is just and right."<sup>33</sup> Stalin repeated that he would be prepared to accept the Curzon line instead of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line. Poland would be compensated with German lands to its west.

Churchill promised to take the suggestion back to the London Poles in the hope that Mikolajczyk would reconsider Stalin's offer. Roosevelt, though, abstained from any detailed frontier discussions. There were, he said, six to seven million Americans of Polish extraction in the United States and as a practical man he "did not wish to lose their vote."<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Roosevelt had come to Teheran to improve relations with the Soviet leader, and did not want to give Stalin any reason not to trust him. On that account,

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<sup>32</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, The Conferences of Cairo and Teheran, 1943* (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 599.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 594.



although Roosevelt did not disagree with the Curzon line proposal, he chose to avoid any specific discussions about it at Teheran.<sup>35</sup> In fact, just weeks before the Teheran Conference, Roosevelt, through his Ambassador Joseph Davies, told Stalin he could have his border with Poland. Believing Stalin needed Poland for security reasons, Roosevelt was willing to concede to the Soviet's wishes.<sup>36</sup> However, for publicity reasons in the United States, the President could not publicly take a stand on the issue.

As 1944 progressed so did Stalin's demands concerning Poland. Frustrated from dealing with a hostile London government, the Soviets began distributing leaflets declaring the formation of a new National Council in Poland. This National Council announced that a new Polish government would be formed, one that was free from anti-Soviet cabinet members and one that embodied Poles from Poland, the United States and Great Britain.<sup>37</sup> Mikolajczyk, concerned about the new formation of a Soviet-inspired Polish government, received confirmation from Roosevelt and Churchill that they still recognized the London Poles as Poland's only legitimate government. However, in the winter of 1943-1944

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<sup>35</sup> Keith Eubank, *Summit at Teheran* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), 359.

<sup>36</sup> Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 193-194.

<sup>37</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 55.

the Allied leaders began to persuade Mikolajczyk to reconfigure his government in accordance with some of Stalin's wishes. Churchill told Mikolajczyk that Stalin would never allow a restoration of relations as long as there were anti-Soviet members in the London government. Stalin demanded the removal of President Wladyslaw Raczekiewicz as well as Mikolajczyk's Chief of Staff and Minister of Information. Mikolajczyk, however, was acceptable to Stalin.<sup>38</sup>

Incensed, Mikolajczyk refused to accept the Soviet puppets as legitimate leaders. Furthermore, Stalin insisted that the Polish Prime Minister denounce Sikorski's government for bringing Katyn to the attention of the International Red Cross. In an attempt to mediate the latest dispute, Roosevelt told Molotov that he understood Stalin's need to deal with a cooperative Polish government, but to act too hasty would be counter productive to "long range objectives."<sup>39</sup> But Stalin would not waiver on Katyn. When asked by Molotov if he would denounce his predecessor's actions, Mikolajczyk simply laughed. "We have no other business at this time," he declared.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 3 *The British Commonwealth and Europe*, 1230.

<sup>39</sup> Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 1440.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

Eager to meet with President Roosevelt face to face, Mikolajczyk had requested a meeting in July, 1943. The Ambassador to Poland, A.J. Drexel Biddle Jr., informed the Prime Minister that the President would see him in January. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, in a memo to Roosevelt dated January 13, 1944, reminded the President that Churchill wanted to postpone Mikolajczyk's meeting with Roosevelt until some sort of agreement had been reached regarding the Polish question.<sup>41</sup> Roosevelt responded that he hoped Mikolajczyk would delay his visit until February.<sup>42</sup>

On January 20, 1944, Mikolajczyk met once again with Churchill. "The British government takes the view that Poland must be strong, independent and free," Churchill remarked, then added, "from the Curzon line to the Oder."<sup>43</sup> In what he termed his "Five Point Plan", Churchill proposed a five-point solution to Poland's problems. According to Churchill, Poland must accept the Curzon line as a basis for negotiations over its eastern frontier. In exchange, Poles would be able to move west of the line, and all Germans would be removed from Poland's new territory of East Prussia, Danzig, and Upper Silesia. Churchill then

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<sup>41</sup> Hull to Roosevelt, 13 January 1944, President's Secretary's File (henceforth PSF), FDR Library, Hyde Park, New York. (henceforth FDR Library)

<sup>42</sup> Roosevelt to Hull, 14 January 1944, PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>43</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 51.

promised that his solutions would receive the approval and guarantee of the United States and Great Britain.<sup>44</sup>

Churchill also reminded Mikolajczyk that if he accepted the plan an agreement might be reached as to collaboration between the Polish underground and the advancing Red Army.<sup>45</sup>

Mikolajczyk knew the meaning behind Churchill's words: Britain supported Stalin's claims to eastern Poland. When Mikolajczyk commented that the Soviets had been disarming and arresting the very members of the Polish underground who helped the Russians defeat the Germans, Churchill answered that was simply another reason why Poland should quickly agree to the Curzon line.<sup>46</sup> Unable to comply with Churchill's wishes, Mikolajczyk, disappointed and alarmed, left the Prime Minister.

In a memo to the British Government in February, Mikolajczyk declared that the Polish government was eager to start conversations with Stalin, but that Stalin's dictatorial demand of the Curzon line was impossible. Mikolajczyk would only agree to a possible demarcation line running east of Vilna and Lwow, thus giving Poland control of those cities after the war. Lwow, lying in the eastern

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<sup>44</sup> Jan Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 269; Francis L. Loewenheim, ed. *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1975), 421.

<sup>45</sup> Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 52.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

half of Poland, was surrounded by rich forests and abundant oil fields. Although the majority of the citizens were Polish in ethnicity, Stalin insisted that the city should lie on the Soviet side of the border. When Mikolajczyk refused to concede Lwow to the Soviets, Stalin refused the demarcation line. Mikolajczyk argued that he was "not empowered to give away half my country. Poland cannot emerge from this war diminished."<sup>47</sup> The Poles refused to talk any further about giving up Poland's eastern territory and the Soviets refused to begin negotiations until the Curzon line was agreed to by the Poles.<sup>48</sup> The stalemate continued.

Churchill, disappointed that Mikolajczyk would not agree to his proposal, wrote Roosevelt concerning the matter. Churchill stressed that "although Great Britain had gone to war for the sake of Poland, they had not gone to war for the sake of any particular frontier line."<sup>49</sup> The President's policy towards the Curzon line was similar to Churchill's. In a meeting with British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, Roosevelt stated he had no objections to Russian expansion to the Curzon line and to Poland's

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>48</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 3 *The British Commonwealth and Europe*, 1223. In agreeing to the Curzon line and the territorial changes under the Soviet proposal, total loss by Poland was 42,484 square miles.

<sup>49</sup> Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt* vol. 2, 686.

compensation to the west. His opinion rested on the fact that he viewed friendly relations with Stalin as an absolute necessity.<sup>50</sup> Roosevelt believed his foreign policy should revolve around supporting and spreading democracy. Because of these ideals, the President treaded carefully with Stalin, who he considered "a realist who was neither an imperialist nor a communist."<sup>51</sup> In addition, Roosevelt was wary of making any final treaty concerning Poland until the war concluded. To settle Poland's territorial dispute meant that Roosevelt would be forced to settle all territorial disputes. In Europe alone, there were more than thirty boundary questions being debated. In the words of Secretary of State Cordell Hull, to investigate Poland's border problems would open a "Pandora's box of infinite trouble."<sup>52</sup>

Mikolajczyk turned to Roosevelt for help, not yet realizing the President's view on the Soviet Union and Stalin. He pleaded with the President to see him as soon as possible so the two men could discuss Churchill's proposal. However, both Roosevelt and Hull thought a visit by Mikolajczyk at that time would be inadvisable. "I cannot help but feel," Hull wrote Roosevelt, "that his visit at

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<sup>50</sup> Wandycz, *The United States and Poland*, 263.

<sup>51</sup> Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 3 and Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 292.

<sup>52</sup> Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 1273.

this time might be misinterpreted and might be more detrimental than helpful to the Polish cause."<sup>53</sup> In a telegram to Mikolajczyk, Roosevelt declined the Prime Minister's request to visit the United States stating that "...it is most essential that nothing be done which might be harmful to the best interests of Poland and that accordingly the visit of the Prime Minister should be postponed until a later time."<sup>54</sup>

For four more months the Polish leader refused Stalin's demands for Polish territory and government reorganization. In March, Mikolajczyk pleaded his case to Roosevelt once again. In a letter dated March 18, 1944, Mikolajczyk wrote Roosevelt that the President's interest in Poland helped maintain the morale of the Polish nation, but proclaimed that the Soviet Union was indeed a serious threat to Poland.<sup>55</sup> In contrast to Roosevelt's own views of the Soviet Union, Mikolajczyk implored the President to help change public opinion. He wrote,

It appears to me wrong to lead the public opinion to believe that democracy exists where in reality it does not and cannot exist for a long time, as this is fraught with the danger of causing deep disillusionment and even unhappiness in nations who may be subjected to a rule

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<sup>53</sup> Hull to Roosevelt, 25 January 1944, PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>54</sup> Roosevelt to Mikolajczyk, 27 January 1944, PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>55</sup> Mikolajczyk to Roosevelt, 18 March 1944, PSF, FDR Library.

which while recognizing the freedom of the State, denies that of the individual.<sup>56</sup>

In closing, the Prime Minister appealed to Roosevelt to do all in his power to safeguard the sovereignty of Poland and reminded him that a visit to the United States would assure the Poles that their government "continues to act in the closest contact and understanding both with the United States and Great Britain."<sup>57</sup>

Then, in May, 1944, Roosevelt agreed to see Mikolajczyk in Washington. It was Poland's last chance at survival.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



The Meetings  
June 6-14, 1944

Mikolajczyk felt optimistic about his trip to the United States. He had long proclaimed his respect for President Roosevelt, and Poland's admiration for America. Mikolajczyk's optimism, however, was not shared by several American diplomats. Edward Stettinius, Undersecretary of State, told reporters in a press conference that the United States had no new proposals to offer the Polish Prime Minister.<sup>58</sup> Other American diplomats, such as Secretary of State Cordell Hull and diplomat George Kennan, were all skeptical that a meeting between Roosevelt and Mikolajczyk would produce anything useful. Hull had long been wary about Mikolajczyk's visit. He had delayed the Prime Minister's visit for months on the grounds that a personal discussion between Mikolajczyk and the President would not resolve Poland's problems with Soviet Russia. Hull was also concerned about the publicity the visit would receive and the impression it might give the Soviets.<sup>59</sup> Kennan, on the other hand, felt that Poland's cause was much worse off than most Poles believed, and that what they faced was "a

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<sup>58</sup> *New York Times*, 6 June 1944, p.7.

<sup>59</sup> Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 1441.

situation far uglier and more recalcitrant than was generally recognized."<sup>60</sup>

Despite the opinions of top American officials, Mikolajczyk was hopeful. He attached great importance to Roosevelt's invitation; it was tangible proof of moral support, and it enhanced the Polish cause in the eyes of the world, including the Soviets. The Premier's first meeting, a brief conversation with Stettinius on June 6, allowed the Undersecretary to probe Mikolajczyk's positions before the meeting with Roosevelt on June 7. Stettinius took extensive notes, and Mikolajczyk found the American both pleasant and well prepared.<sup>61</sup>

At the onset the Prime Minister expressed his optimism for Poland's future and proclaimed that in recent weeks the Soviet Union seemed more eager to resume relations with the Polish government. Mikolajczyk believed this melting of tensions, however slight, was due to the fact that the Soviets realized the strength of the Polish underground army, the so-called Home Army. In addition, Mikolajczyk argued that the Soviets failed to obtain any support from the Polish people in Soviet-occupied areas of Poland. "The general atmosphere," Mikolajczyk commented, "is somewhat

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<sup>60</sup> Kennan, *Memoirs*, 203.

<sup>61</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 59.

more propitious than at any time since the rupture."<sup>62</sup>

Despite this perceived relaxation in tensions, Mikolajczyk stressed that under no circumstances would Poland reorganize its government. According to the Soviets, the desired reorganization included the removal of not only the Polish President, Wladyslaw Raczkiewicz, but the Minister of War and the Minister of Information as well.<sup>63</sup> Mikolajczyk's flat refusal did not come as a surprise to Stettinius. The Prime Minister had refused publicly to reorganize his government according to Stalin's wishes throughout 1943 and 1944.

When the question of Poland's boundaries arose, Mikolajczyk again did not waver. "Poland," he avowed, "should not emerge from the war with diminished territory."<sup>64</sup> The only adjustment Mikolajczyk was willing to discuss with Stettinius was territorial acquisitions for Poland in East Prussia and Silesia, although he stressed Poland must not be diminished in the east as a result. Mikolajczyk's motivation behind these territorial acquisitions in the west was obvious. East Prussia provided Poland with a free and broad access to the sea. Silesia gave Poland, and deprived Germany, of an important industrial

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<sup>62</sup> Stettinius to Roosevelt, 6 June 1944, PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

base.<sup>65</sup> Mikolajczyk also insisted that no territorial settlement would be accepted which would "leave the Polish people with the sense that injustice had been done to them."<sup>66</sup> Clearly, the Prime Minister was referring to Stalin's request for the Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet boundary. Although Stettinius did not press the issue, he noted Mikolajczyk's comments. Roosevelt, however, would press the issue the following day.

Poland's postwar situation dominated the conversation between Stettinius and Mikolajczyk. For months Mikolajczyk had been trying to get some sense of Roosevelt's plans for Poland after the end of the war. The President, though, had remained elusive. He did not wish to discuss final agreements until the war was over. However, at his first meeting with Stettinius, Mikolajczyk emphasized his apprehension that Poland was to become a Red satellite; he stressed that there should be absolutely no interference in the internal life of Poland by any outside power.<sup>67</sup> By "outside power" Mikolajczyk clearly meant the Soviet Union.

Before the meeting ended, Mikolajczyk and Stettinius

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 59 and Stettinius to Roosevelt, 6 June 1944, PSF, FDR Library.

discussed the Prime Minister's concerns that Poland was becoming increasingly isolated from its allies, including the United States. Mikolajczyk argued that the three great powers were discussing Poland without Polish participation. He was very close to the truth. At the Teheran conference in 1943, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin had tentatively agreed to the Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet border. As stated earlier, Roosevelt, through Davies, had told Stalin he would not object to the Curzon line. However, during Mikolajczyk's meetings with Roosevelt, the Pole was kept in the dark about the decisions at Teheran.

Perhaps somewhat wary of the United States' policy of appeasing Stalin, Mikolajczyk left Stettinius with one last warning. "If you continue to call Russia a democracy," Mikolajczyk cautioned, "you may eventually regret that statement, and your people will condemn you."<sup>68</sup>

Mikolajczyk's first visit with President Roosevelt occurred on the second day of his stay in Washington, the 7<sup>th</sup> of June. Although the Prime Minister had been informed that Roosevelt was ill and could only meet with him for a brief moment, the two men talked for over an hour and a half. Stettinius, as well as the Polish Ambassador to the United States, Jan Ciechanowski, were present. Despite the President's illness Ciechanowski commented that it was

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<sup>68</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 58.

evident the President was out to create a friendly atmosphere for the Polish Premier.<sup>69</sup> Mikolajczyk immediately felt at ease with the charismatic American but found him older and more depleted since he had seen him last in 1941.<sup>70</sup> Roosevelt started by talking about Stalin.

"Stalin," he stated with animation, "is not an imperialist." Mikolajczyk, believing Roosevelt's faith in Stalin was tragically misplaced, kept quiet and let the President continue.<sup>71</sup> Although Stalin was naturally suspicious, Roosevelt declared that the Soviet had a sense of humor and that he [Roosevelt] was impressed by it. He also pointed out that he had a much better rapport with Stalin than Churchill had with the Soviet leader. According to the President, Stalin and he had gotten along "famously" while Churchill's "nineteenth-century British mentality" had driven a wedge between Churchill and Stalin.<sup>72</sup> Roosevelt continued with anecdotes from Teheran while Mikolajczyk waited patiently to discuss Poland's future and its frontiers.

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<sup>69</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 291.

<sup>70</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 59. Mikolajczyk had met Roosevelt once in 1941 on a visit with Sikorski. At the time, Mikolajczyk was the vice-chairman of the Polish National Council.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., and Jan Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 293.

The Premier's first question addressed the issue of borders. He asked if the issue had been addressed at Teheran; Roosevelt was elusive. Although the President stated that Stalin was not eager to discuss boundaries, he did emphasize that neither he nor Stalin had referred to the Curzon line as a *final* frontier. Roosevelt explained that the fact that 1944 was an election year made it difficult for the President to act on the Polish question. However, Roosevelt did mention that, concerning the Curzon line, it was Churchill who first suggested it be the final border. Mikolajczyk, shocked by the statement, told the President he could not understand how Churchill could be so immoral as to give away half his country. However, Mikolajczyk did not want to insult the President by attacking his friend, so he registered his shock and did not pursue an attack upon what Roosevelt called "Churchill's suggestion."<sup>73</sup>

On the issue of Polish-Soviet relations Mikolajczyk stated his hope that things were beginning to turn around for Polish-Soviet relations; Roosevelt agreed. Now that the Red Army had entered Poland, Roosevelt believed Stalin would be more inclined to offer an olive branch. Stalin, the President thought, would soon find out that he could not easily win the confidence of the Polish people without the

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<sup>73</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 221-222.

backing of the Polish government in London.<sup>74</sup> However, despite his optimism that Stalin would make an overture, Roosevelt again urged the Pole to quickly reach an understanding with the Russians. Eager to reassure Mikolajczyk that Stalin was in fact a "realist," he told the Prime Minister that Stalin would not dare to take away Poland's freedom after the war because he knew that the government of the United States stood firmly behind Mikolajczyk and Poland's independence.<sup>75</sup> When Mikolajczyk argued that there was every indication Stalin would deny Poland's independence, Roosevelt broached the topic of granting some concessions in order for Poland to remain free. His short speech stunned Mikolajczyk.

I'm sure I'll be able to manage an agreement in which Poland will get Silesia, East Prussia, Königsberg, Lwów, the region of Tarnopol and the oil and potash area of Drohobycz. But I don't believe I can secure the city of Vilna for you. Stalin doesn't want to annihilate Poland. Stalin knows that Poland has a strong position in the Allied camp, especially with the United States. I will see to it that Poland will not be hurt in this war and will emerge strongly independent.<sup>76</sup>

Roosevelt's words shocked the Prime Minister. It seemed to the Pole that Roosevelt was sanctioning Stalin's claims

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<sup>74</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 293.

<sup>75</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 59-60.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.



to eastern Poland, claims that Roosevelt had previously discredited. Frustrated by Roosevelt's change in attitude, Mikolajczyk told the President that Stalin had no more right to take half of Poland than he had to take half of the United States of America. In addition, Poles were dying every day to save the piece of land Roosevelt suggested giving to the Soviets.<sup>77</sup> Mikolajczyk made it clear to Roosevelt that he would not bargain with Stalin.

Roosevelt then changed the subject and broached the issue of reorganizing the Polish government in London. Again he urged Mikolajczyk to make some concessions in order to establish collaboration with Soviet Russia. "When a thing becomes unavoidable," he warned, "one should adapt oneself to it."<sup>78</sup> Mikolajczyk did not agree. He stood his ground with Roosevelt, as he would continue to do throughout the week. Mikolajczyk insisted that by complying with Stalin's demands to reconfigure his government he would open the door to Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Poland.<sup>79</sup> Once the door was open the Prime Minister was certain it could not be shut.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Mikolajczyk was shocked by the President's decision on Vilna, which Roosevelt had previously said would remain in Poland.

<sup>78</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 293.

<sup>79</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 222.

Before Mikolajczyk left the White House the two leaders discussed the possibility of a face to face meeting between Stalin and Mikolajczyk. Stalin, through President Eduard Benes of the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile, had offered to open informal discussions with the Polish government.<sup>80</sup> However, Stalin had two pre-conditions for discussion: that the Curzon line be accepted as the basis of the final Soviet-Polish frontier and, secondly, that the Polish government be reconstituted.<sup>81</sup>

Mikolajczyk was willing to meet with Stalin, but his conditions differed from those of the Soviets. He would agree to go to the Soviet Union if he were guaranteed Roosevelt's support, if there were no prior acceptance of the Soviet demands and if the meeting concentrated on the collaboration of the Red Army and the Polish underground army.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Mikolajczyk said he would only go if there were a chance of reaching an agreement. He would not make the trip if it would lead to a more complicated situation, one that would prove to be beyond repair.<sup>83</sup>

The President promised Mikolajczyk he would offer

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<sup>80</sup> Schoenfeld to Hull, 9 July 1944. PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>81</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 295.

<sup>82</sup> General Sikorski Historical Institute, Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations: 1939-1945 (London: Heinemann Publishers, 1967), 252.

<sup>83</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 222-223.

himself as a moderator, someone who would "help to interpret things and help in reaching an understanding."<sup>84</sup> However, his definition of moderator, he made clear, was not the same as "mediator" in the official sense. Once again Roosevelt stressed the fact that 1944 was an election year and that he could not officially propose mediation on Mikolajczyk's part. Roosevelt said he would think about sending Stalin a telegram urging the Soviet to meet with Mikolajczyk as soon as possible, despite the obvious differences in stipulations. As Mikolajczyk rose to leave, President Roosevelt complimented the Pole on his fluent English and reminded his guest that there was to be a reception that evening at the White House in Mikolajczyk's honor.<sup>85</sup> Dignitaries from all over Washington were invited to attend the full-dress affair.

Mikolajczyk, although no final decisions were made, was pleased with his first meeting with Roosevelt. Although he would not disclose specifics from the meeting with the press, he did tell reporters that he was delighted to find Roosevelt in fine spirits and was grateful that the President had invited him at a time when he was busy with the great events in Europe.<sup>86</sup> The Prime Minister kept his

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>85</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 295.

<sup>86</sup> *New York Times*, 7 June 1944, p. 6.

comments to the press short all week. He had previously agreed, before his arrival in the United States, not to make any public speeches nor meet with any groups of Polish-Americans. American officials, including Roosevelt, were concerned Mikolajczyk's visit would influence internal political matters, in other words, the upcoming elections.<sup>87</sup> In addition, officials such as Cordell Hull were concerned the trip would indicate that the United States favored Poland over the Soviet Union.<sup>88</sup> Consequently, his statements to the press were kept to a minimum.

When Mikolajczyk arrived at the dinner at seven o'clock that evening, he was introduced to the forty-nine other guests. Included in the party were Secretaries Harold Ickes, Henry Morgenthau, Henry Stimson, Francis Biddle, James F. Brynes, Frances Perkins, and Edward Stettinius. In addition, Eleanor Roosevelt (who was seated next to Mikolajczyk) and her daughter were in attendance, as well as General Marshall and General Arnold, who were scheduled to fly out later that night for Europe.<sup>89</sup> The Polish delegation included Mikolajczyk, Ambassador Ciechanowski, General Tabor, advisor

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<sup>87</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Vol. 3: The British Commonwealth and Europe, 1944* (Washington DC: The United States Government Printing Office, 1966), 1272.

<sup>88</sup> Hull to Roosevelt, 16 May 1944. PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Witold Kulerski, and the Counselor of the London Embassy, Jozef Zaranski.

President Roosevelt began the dinner by telling his guests of his magnificent mood. The news from Normandy encouraged Roosevelt, and he announced he was thrilled to have Mikolajczyk with him on such a grand occasion, especially since the Poles were "fighting so splendidly against the common enemy."<sup>90</sup> Then, in a departure from normal protocol (the President normally said only a few words of greeting to his guest of honor), Roosevelt surprised Mikolajczyk by making an impromptu fifteen minute speech on Polish affairs. The speech, full of praise for Poland, also alluded to Roosevelt's future plans for the country.

Roosevelt began the toast to Mikolajczyk by proclaiming that he had recently looked over several maps of Poland throughout the decades and had discovered that at one time or another all of Central Europe was a part of Poland. Therefore, the President said, where Poland's boundaries were concerned, the United States and Poland could not go by history as Poland would include almost all of Russia, and a large part of Germany and Czechoslovakia.<sup>91</sup> "We have to do the practical thing," Roosevelt declared. "That is what the

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<sup>90</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 296.

<sup>91</sup> Toast of the President at the State Dinner for the Prime Minister of Poland, 7 June 1944. Franklin D. Roosevelt Speech Files, FDR Library.

Prime Minister and I have been talking about: the practical restoration of Poland as a country."<sup>92</sup>

Roosevelt continued by addressing the issue of the Soviet Union. He reiterated to his audience the importance of the Soviet Union and Poland becoming good neighbors, neighbors who could rely on each other, yet remain independent. Furthermore, he reminded the Poles present that at Teheran Stalin had said more than once that he did not want Poland to be an appendage of Russia but rather a "completely self-governing, large and completely independent nation."<sup>93</sup> However, Roosevelt again repeated his conviction that there should be a meeting of the minds over Poland, but thought that the leaders should refrain from discussing the "smaller details," such as the boundaries of the two countries.<sup>94</sup> In addition, he stated that what counted most was creating the spirit of Europe that existed when he was a young man, traveling on a bicycle throughout the region; Poland, he continued, still possessed that spirit, as well as independence and integrity. Roosevelt stressed that the spirit of the old Europe is what everyone should be working toward, they should be "getting away from the mere questions

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

of whether this town will be on this side of the line or that side of the line."<sup>95</sup>

The speech ended with a declaration of happiness that the Prime Minister was in their midst and the hope that Mikolajczyk would return to the United States soon. In addition, Roosevelt expressed the hope that he would get to meet the other members of the Polish government in London as well as meet the President of Poland. "We are glad to have the Prime Minister with us," Roosevelt concluded.<sup>96</sup> The President then led his guests in a toast welcoming the Prime Minister of Poland.

If Mikolajczyk was bothered by Roosevelt's comments on Polish borders and his obvious reference to the city of Lwow, he did not show it. On Mrs. Roosevelt's urging, Mikolajczyk stood to reply to the President's speech.<sup>97</sup> He began by stating his gratefulness for being invited to the United States and expressed envy that Americans lived in a country so happy and free. "I have only one desire," Mikolajczyk revealed, "the desire that our people, after this terrible war, can be as happy as are the American citizens."<sup>98</sup> Mikolajczyk proceeded by stating that Poles

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 296.

<sup>98</sup> Reply of the Prime Minister of Poland, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk to The Toast of the President. 7 June 1944. FDR Speech Files, FDR Library.

could be happy with only a tiny portion of the physical possessions which Americans owned. "We could endure a much lower standard of living if we could secure the freedom for which we fight."<sup>99</sup> He continued by introducing General Tabor who, he explained, had just returned from fighting the Germans as head of the Polish underground army, and who would be returning to Poland in only a few days.

Most importantly, Mikolajczyk's speech emphasized the determination of the Polish people to fight the enemy. He emphasized that his country would do everything in its power to win the war; he ended with a nod to Roosevelt's earlier promises to help Poland. The Prime Minister stated that he knew that if Poland did its duty, Roosevelt's promise of democracy would be fulfilled in Poland.<sup>100</sup> He finished, "I do not mean to limit this to Poland. It is my hope that the United States' concept of freedom some day will rule all European peoples."<sup>101</sup> The short speech ended with a salute to the President's health.

After the dinner had ended, the President and Mrs. Roosevelt entertained their guests in the White House drawing room, where Mikolajczyk met and talked with Cabinet

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<sup>99</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 62.

<sup>100</sup> Reply of the Prime Minister of Poland, 7 June 1944, FDR Speech Files, FDR Library.

<sup>101</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 62.



officials, military officers and civil officials. At ten o'clock, after the guests had departed, Stettinius escorted Mikolajczyk, General Tabor, and Jan Ciechanowski into Roosevelt's private study for further discussions.<sup>102</sup>

Quickly Roosevelt began questioning General Tabor, whose name "Tabor" was actually a pseudonym he used in his work as Chief of General Staff of the Polish Underground Army. Curious, the President probed the officer with questions on his activities in Poland, how he had managed to get out, and the details of his journey to London. Finally, Roosevelt asked the General to give a complete picture of the Polish Home Army. Spreading his secret maps throughout the room, Tabor pointed out the Home Army centers and detachments in Poland. Urged on by the President, who was "thrilled" with the information, Tabor went on to explain how units contacted each other, their methods of grouping into larger detachments, and how guerilla actions were coordinated. He gave Roosevelt figures of sabotage activities as well as the number of bridges, railways, and German trucks, trains, guns, and ammunition dumps destroyed. The Home Army tied down 500,000 Nazi soldiers in Poland as well as prevented one out of every eight German transports

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<sup>102</sup> Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.: 1943-1946* (New York: New Viewpoints Press, 1975), 77.

from reaching their destination.<sup>103</sup> However, the general stressed that it was very difficult for him to plan the underground operations without knowing the Russians' plans and in what direction the Red Army was moving. Roosevelt replied they would never get that information from the Russians. As a matter of fact, he said, it was impossible for the United States to get that information from the Soviets.<sup>104</sup>

Turning to Mikolajczyk, Roosevelt said he now realized the importance of the Polish underground organization and was sure that Stalin, once he realized its salience, would see the advantage of coordinating the Red Army with it. The Polish underground military organization, according to Roosevelt, was the "missing link in Soviet-Polish relations."<sup>105</sup> Then, much to General Tabor's relief, Roosevelt offered to supply the underground forces with sufficient arms and ammunition. The President believed that it was possible to parachute arms, munitions, supplies, and funds to the Polish forces using the Allied air bases in Russia. Roosevelt asked Stettinius to put General Tabor in touch with the Combined Chiefs of Staff as well as Admiral

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<sup>103</sup> Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 28.

<sup>104</sup> Stettinius, *The Diaries*, 79.

<sup>105</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 297.

Leahy, the President's Chief of Staff. A meeting was scheduled for June 10 with Leahy as well as General Bissell, General McNarney and Assistant Secretary of War McCloy.<sup>106</sup>

Next the conversation turned again to Soviet-Polish problems. Roosevelt decided he would send Stalin a telegram expressing his interest in and appreciation of Mikolajczyk and General Tabor, as well as the Polish Home Army. He told the Prime Minister that he now had great hopes for the coordination of military action between the estranged governments; Roosevelt would urge Stalin to talk with the Pole "man to man."<sup>107</sup> Mikolajczyk concurred, but warned Roosevelt that establishing contact with Stalin could lead to great difficulties. The Prime Minister feared that Stalin would not agree to restrict their conversations to matters of military coordination. Stalin, he was sure, would want to discuss territorial and political demands. It was difficult to imagine, Mikolajczyk went on, that the Soviets would not press for the territories east of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line. Roosevelt agreed that this was a possibility, but thought conversations were an absolute necessity for collaboration.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> General Sikorski Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, 250.

<sup>107</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 223.

<sup>108</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 299.

Again the President broached the idea of his role as a "moderator" in the discussions. He explained the role as it existed in the Presbyterian Church; a moderator was not a bishop or a minister, but instead someone who helped interpret the situation.<sup>109</sup> Since the Polish-Soviet situation had reached a stalemate, Roosevelt thought that "some outside impulse had to be given to the stationary machinery of negotiation to move it in the right direction."<sup>110</sup> Roosevelt used yet another example, that of the problems between labor and management, to demonstrate the role of a mediator.<sup>111</sup> By using the methods some U.S. companies developed with labor, such as talking in a "human way" to one another and only discussing common interests, Roosevelt believed that a "human conversation" could take place between Mikolajczyk and Stalin. Mikolajczyk agreed but reminded the President that the salvation of Poland rested ultimately in American hands.<sup>112</sup> Pleased with the compliment, Roosevelt agreed to push the issue with the Soviet Union, and the Poles left around midnight, "definitely under his [Roosevelt's] spell."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 222.

<sup>110</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 299.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>112</sup> Stettinius, *The Diaries*, 80.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

While Mikolajczyk and the Polish officials were being entertained at the White House on June 7, Dr. Oscar Lange, a Polish-American Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, returned from meetings with the Soviet leader in Moscow. Firmly pro-Communist and an avid supporter of Stalin, Lange had been invited to Moscow at the request of the Union of Polish Patriots, a group which claimed to be interested in educational and cultural activities among Poles in the Soviet Union but which actually was operating as a Soviet-sponsored alternative to the Polish government-in-exile.<sup>114</sup> In a press conference upon his return, Lange stressed Stalin's sincerity in his promises to Poland and quoted Stalin as saying, "Russia thinks of Poland as a future ally. The Soviet Union does not want to interfere in Poland's political, economic, and social system."<sup>115</sup> When asked whether the Polish people felt bitter towards the Soviet Union over the invasion of Poland in 1939, Lange responded that some did feel bitter, but that it would not be an obstacle to "good relations between the countries if Russia acts decently."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> David K. Niles to Miss Tully, 6 June 1944. PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>115</sup> *New York Times*, 9 June 1944, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

Lange, immediately after his return to the United States, wired Mikolajczyk in Washington asking for a meeting before the Prime Minister left for Great Britain. Mikolajczyk had previously told British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden that he could not promise to meet with Lange, as the professor held no official position, and that he doubted whether anything could come from such a meeting.<sup>117</sup> However, for unknown reasons, Lange's telegram was withheld from Mikolajczyk by the Polish embassy in Washington.<sup>118</sup> He did not receive it until Tuesday, June 13.

Mikolajczyk's next meeting with Roosevelt was not scheduled until the following Monday, June 12. While the Prime Minister was waiting, he had almost uninterrupted contact with Stettinius, who had become a friendly and supportive ally to the Polish visitors.<sup>119</sup> In an early morning meeting with Stettinius on June 8, Mikolajczyk and Ciechanowski probed the American for information. Assuring Stettinius that he intended to meet with Stalin, Mikolajczyk asked whether or not Roosevelt would actually cable the request to Stalin and whether or not the telegram was a spontaneous idea on the part of Roosevelt. Stettinius assured Mikolajczyk that sending a telegram to Stalin was

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<sup>117</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 62.

<sup>118</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 224.

<sup>119</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 290.

only a spontaneous project; however, he believed it was a project that would not be carried through. "You should be aware," Stettinius warned, "that the President is a really sick man. He always has many big ideas, but the condition of his health prevents him from putting them into effect."<sup>120</sup>

The greater issue, Stettinius believed, was whether Mikolajczyk wished to enter into conversations with Stalin as soon as possible or put them off until a later time. Stettinius suggested that the matter should be held over for at least one month so further consideration could be given to the possibility of a meeting.<sup>121</sup> Mikolajczyk agreed.

Mikolajczyk's major concern was whether a meeting with Stalin would injure Poland's cause. He was afraid to risk being forced into a discussion over territory and borders. The Prime Minister turned to Stettinius for counsel. Answering honestly, Stettinius gave his unofficial advice:

At the present time in our internal pre-election period, and with the existing war conditions outside our shores, the President is in a very difficult situation. Neither Great Britain nor America can take a firmer stand against the Soviet Union. The President is not in a position to give the Polish Government truly effective support.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 223.

<sup>121</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol.3: *The British Commonwealth and Europe*, 1278.

<sup>122</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 223.

Stettinius continued by stating that although the United States was unable to help Poland's cause at the present time, he felt sure that in the future, once the outcome of the war had been decided, the United States would "come back to her fundamental moral principles, and she will then undoubtedly support Poland strongly and successfully."<sup>123</sup> Mikolajczyk was grateful for Stettinius's candor.

While waiting for his next meeting with the President, Mikolajczyk was entertained with an official dinner at the Polish Embassy. While there, he was able to discuss the possibility of a meeting with Lange with Charles E. Bohlen, the State Department's Eastern European Division Chief and his assistant, Elbridge Durbrow.<sup>124</sup> Both Bohlen and Durbrow pressed Mikolajczyk to see the Professor, and although they admitted that Lange was unreliable, the two men feared that he might publish the fact that Mikolajczyk had refused a meeting. Thus, any refusal would give the impression that the Prime Minister did not want to explore an additional channel of Polish-Soviet understanding.<sup>125</sup> Mikolajczyk agreed to think about a meeting with Lange.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 311. At this point Mikolajczyk had still not received Lange's telegram requesting a meeting.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



After a weekend drive in the Virginia countryside and a tour of Washington landmarks, an anxious Mikolajczyk met with Roosevelt again on Monday, June 12. Roosevelt suggested that Mikolajczyk get in contact with Stalin as soon as possible. He stressed the importance in seeking personal understanding with the Soviets. Mikolajczyk, however, informed Roosevelt that both he and Stettinius had decided that it would be more judicious to wait thirty days before making contact. Roosevelt wholeheartedly disagreed. Although he understood the difficulties facing Mikolajczyk, Roosevelt argued that the Pole should face the emergency "without delay" and should be prepared to make some concessions, especially with regard to the composition of Mikolajczyk's government. When Mikolajczyk argued that he could not go against the will of his people, the President stated simply that Mikolajczyk would have to return to Poland as soon as possible and "explain the whole situation personally to the Polish people."<sup>126</sup>

Roosevelt emphasized that the quicker the Premier went to Moscow and established friendly relations with Stalin, the less likely Stalin would be to insist on territorial demands. If an easier relationship existed, he continued, the United States might help in getting Stalin to agree to let Poland keep the oil rich cities of Lwow and Drohobycz,

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 303-304.

and the region of Stanislawow. Wilno, he said, appeared more doubtful. Roosevelt stressed he was not worried about territorial matters, and if they[the Poles] had to give up a "little something somewhere else," he thought it was a "pretty good exchange."<sup>127</sup> With regard to Poland's western borders, Roosevelt assured Mikolajczyk of Silesia as well as East Prussia, despite Stalin's claim to the city, and port of Konigsberg. Although Mikolajczyk agreed that Silesia should fall inside Polish borders, he was concerned about any exaggerated expansion of Poland westward, as it would burden Poland with a large German minority. In addition, Mikolajczyk knew any push westward would lead to animosity with post-war Germany; the result would be a needed military presence on the border. The Prime Minister knew that the task of defending Poland's new border would fall to the Soviets due to the decimation of Poland's fighting forces. In reference to the eastern border and the Curzon line, Roosevelt once again stressed that settlement of territorial disputes before the end of the war was contrary to American policy.<sup>128</sup>

With regard to the reorganization of the Polish government, Roosevelt told Mikolajczyk that he should make

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<sup>127</sup> General Sikorski Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, 257.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

the changes which the Soviets demanded, for, after all, it was only four people, and it might be the deciding factor. Mikolajczyk refused, saying that it would be misunderstood, by the Polish people and that he would lose face among his fellow countrymen. In addition, he reminded Roosevelt that the decision had been made in 1939 to hold elections during the first three weeks of liberation so that the people could chose their own government officials.<sup>129</sup>

The topic of supplying the Polish underground army arose next. In a memo to the President dated June 9, 1944, Mikolajczyk requested Lend-Lease aid for war weapons, ammunition, and equipment. He also requested an increase in funds for the Polish Government to \$97 million because of greatly expanded activities by Polish organizations in 1944.<sup>130</sup> Roosevelt replied that in principle he was disposed to granting additional monies for the use of the Polish underground forces and promised that the matter would be given consideration. However, Roosevelt stated that if it should not prove feasible to make the entire \$97 million

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<sup>129</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol.3: *The British Commonwealth and Europe*, 1281. The four men Roosevelt spoke of were the President of Poland, Wladyslaw Raczekiewicz; the Commander in Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski; the Minister of War, Lt. General Maryan Kukiel; and the Minister of Information, Stanislaw Kot.

<sup>130</sup> Mikolajczyk to Roosevelt , 9 June 1944. PSF, FDR Library.

available, an initial installment would be given of \$20 million dollars.<sup>131</sup>

Indeed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after Roosevelt's meeting with Mikolajczyk, agreed to give Poland the initial credit of \$20 million dollars.<sup>132</sup> However, the Joint Chiefs added a provision that Poland would receive the money only if Mikolajczyk gave written assurance that the Polish underground army would cooperate fully with the Red Army against the Germans.<sup>133</sup> Mikolajczyk agreed, as he had for months. As the Prime Minister rose to leave the President, Roosevelt requested one more meeting for the June 14; Mikolajczyk accepted.

After his meeting with the President, Mikolajczyk paid a quick visit to Secretary of State Cordell Hull to discuss his possible visit to the Soviet Union. Assuring the Prime Minister that he, too, desired a free and independent Poland, Hull argued it was imperative that Polish and Russian representatives meet on a conversational basis. It was a reiteration of Roosevelt's opinions. Hull sympathized with the Polish government's position that it did not want to reconstruct its government based upon the demands of

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<sup>131</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 3: *The British Commonwealth and Europe*, 1364.

<sup>132</sup> Hull to Roosevelt, 15 June 1944. PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>133</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff to Hull 24 June, 1944. PSF, FDR Library.

another country, but Hull reminded Mikolajczyk that the Soviet Union was not required to recognize the government of any country, or even give a reason for not doing so.<sup>134</sup> "One of these days," Hull concluded, "when both governments decided to make an equal contribution toward working out such deadlocks as this, they would find ways to do so."<sup>135</sup>

On Tuesday, due to the persistence of Bohlen and Stettinius, Mikolajczyk agreed to see Oskar Lange. Lange had sent a letter of protest to the U.S. State Department claiming that the Polish embassy had purposely withheld his telegram from Mikolajczyk.<sup>136</sup> The meeting, which began at 4 PM and lasted over two hours, served only to frustrate the Prime Minister. Mikolajczyk did not express his own views, discuss his government's position, or disclose any plans of action to Professor Lange.<sup>137</sup>

"Stalin," Lange insisted, "does not insist on the Curzon line. He would abandon it but he is afraid of the Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and Lithuanians."<sup>138</sup> In regards to Lwow, Lange explained to Mikolajczyk that Polish soldiers were unwilling to give up the city or any part of Eastern

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<sup>134</sup> Hull, *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 1444-1445.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 1445.

<sup>136</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 62.

<sup>137</sup> General Sikorski Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, 259.

<sup>138</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 224.

Galicia. Stalin, he said, understood this, but repeated that the Soviet Union did not wish to upset the Ukrainians who also wanted the city.<sup>139</sup> Lange continued by telling Mikolajczyk that Stalin was willing to talk with the Pole, as he considered the Prime Minister a democrat. In addition, Lange reported that Stalin denied that he was planning to govern Poland after the war; there would not even be a military Soviet administration in the country. Should no Polish-Soviet agreement be reached before the Red Army occupied Poland, Lange continued, Stalin promised he would entrust the administration of Poland to local Polish authorities. The whole attitude of the Soviets, Lange insisted, would depend on the direction of Poland's foreign policy.<sup>140</sup>

Mikolajczyk, who had sat quietly throughout the meeting, did not believe, or trust, this pro-Soviet Pole. Lange's comments concerning Poland's foreign policy confirmed his belief that the Soviet Union was anxious to sever Poland from its friendships with the western world. Lange interpreted Mikolajczyk's silence as contempt. At a press conference following the meeting he reported, "Mikolajczyk just sat there with a poker face, obviously

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<sup>139</sup> General Sikorski Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, 259.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 260, and Ciechanowski, *Defeat In Victory*, 312.

unwilling to give me his opinion."<sup>141</sup> A few days later Mikolajczyk was offered fifteen minutes of radio time on a Washington station. When he learned Lange had been given the next fifteen minutes for rebuttal, Mikolajczyk cancelled.<sup>142</sup>

As a result of the press conference and radio offer, Mikolajczyk determined that Stalin was using Lange as a lever to influence American public opinion.<sup>143</sup> Jan Ciechanowski, the Polish Ambassador to the United States, after sounding out various commentators in Washington, reported to Mikolajczyk that Americans' opinions of the meeting with Lange differed immensely. "In well-informed circles here," he wrote, "it is believed that all the things which Stalin said to Lange, and which Lange told you, were Stalin's gesture to support Roosevelt in the election."<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, Ciechanowski pleaded with Mikolajczyk to come to a decision concerning Polish-Soviet relations. "We cannot harbor any illusions that the postponement of a decision will help our cause. Whatever we can secure in the next six weeks will be all that we should expect."<sup>145</sup> This dark portrait painted by Ciechanowski disheartened Mikolajczyk. A

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<sup>141</sup> *New York Times*, 14 June 1944. P.7.

<sup>142</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 64.

<sup>143</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 225.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

meeting with Stalin now seemed imperative if Poland was to save her independence.

A letter from Roosevelt arrived for Mikolajczyk the same day, expressing his wishes for the Prime Minister's safe return to London and the President's appreciation for the opportunity to exchange views.<sup>146</sup> Roosevelt wrote of the Poles' courage throughout the war, and commented that these men's indomitable spirit "constitute the best pledge that Poland shall resume her rightful place among the free nations of the world."<sup>147</sup> Attached to the letter was an inscribed photograph of the President.

Mikolajczyk's last conversation with Roosevelt on June 14 lasted more than an hour. The talks began with a tirade by Roosevelt against Charles de Gaulle's Committee of Liberation as the provisional government of France. De Gaulle, stated Roosevelt, was as arduous to deal with "as a prima donna."<sup>148</sup> Mikolajczyk and Ciechanowski, who was also present, only listened, as the Polish government-in-exile had officially just recognized de Gaulle's government.

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<sup>146</sup> Roosevelt to Mikolajczyk, 13 June 1944. PPF, FDR Library.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 307.



Roosevelt expressed his pleasure that Mikolajczyk had been to visit Oskar Lange and asked whether or not he had also seen Father Orlemanski.<sup>149</sup> Orlemanski had discussed the possibility with Stalin of providing more religious freedom for Russian citizens. Roosevelt believed that Stalin's willingness even to talk about the subject boded well for the Soviet Union. Mikolajczyk answered that he would be willing to believe Stalin's declarations of freedom of religion only after the Soviet freed the many Catholic priests detained in Russian prisons.<sup>150</sup>

Finally, the President repeated his request that Mikolajczyk meet face to face with Stalin. He stressed that if the Polish government made some small concessions, such as reorganizing its government, Stalin would not be so adamant on territorial issues.<sup>151</sup> Mikolajczyk replied that he still thought it wrong for the Soviets to impress their unfair conditions on the government of another nation. Furthermore, he argued, a government formed under foreign pressure was illegal, unconstitutional, and unable to conclude any binding agreements. Therefore the new Polish government would be of little use to Stalin, unless,

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 308. Orlemanski, a Catholic priest, had accompanied Lange on his trip to the Soviet Union.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>151</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 222.

Mikolajczyk added, Stalin intended to make Poland a Soviet satellite.<sup>152</sup>

In summing up the final meeting, Roosevelt explained once more his desire to be a moderator in Polish-Soviet negotiations as well as his final decision to send Stalin the telegram. "I want you to rest assured," Roosevelt promised, "that I will watch over this matter and will do all I can to help you." When Mikolajczyk asked if he could feel free to come back to discuss matters with the President again, Roosevelt stated, "Of course, my door is always open."<sup>153</sup> With those final words, Mikolajczyk shook the President's hand and left the Oval Office.

Before leaving for the airport, Mikolajczyk met one last time with Stettinius. The Prime Minister wanted to be certain of Roosevelt's desire to lend Poland moral support. Mikolajczyk, in an attempt to clearly define the United States' role in Polish-Soviet relations, said that he hoped "the President could lend his moral support to the Polish Government by an expression of hope to the Soviet Government that such conversations might be successful."<sup>154</sup> He also addressed the possibility that a stalemate might occur in

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<sup>152</sup> Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 310.

<sup>153</sup> Stettinius, *The Diaries*, 87.

<sup>154</sup> Hull to Roosevelt, 14 June 1944. PSF-Diplomatic Correspondence, FDR Library.

conversations with Stalin. Again, Mikolajczyk told Stettinius that he hoped Roosevelt would lend his support in an effort to overcome any problems with Russia and to nourish a free and independent Poland.<sup>155</sup> Cordell Hull, after reading Stettinius' notes of the meeting, suggested that it "would be advisable to reiterate to him that such moral support as we may be in a position to give will fall within the framework of our tender of good offices."<sup>156</sup>

The final correspondence of the week between Roosevelt and Mikolajczyk was a thank you letter to the President. In it the Prime Minister thanked Roosevelt for his kindness, frank talks, and hospitality. He wrote,

I leave greatly impressed by the conversations which I was privileged to have with you, by your views and your wide knowledge of human and national problems. I would be very happy if the few modest suggestions which you gave me the opportunity of contributing in our talks could even in the slightest way serve the common cause and be of some use to you.<sup>157</sup>

Through Jan Ciechanowski, the Prime Minister also gave Roosevelt a picture of himself and once again acknowledged the President's kindness and sympathy.<sup>158</sup>

In a final Washington press conference, Mikolajczyk

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Mikolajczyk to Roosevelt, 14 June 1944. PPF, FDR Library.

<sup>158</sup> Ciechanowski to Roosevelt, 15 June 1944. PPF, FDR Library.

reiterated that he was confident Poland could count on the support and real friendship of the United States. However, he stressed to reporters that the boundary question had not been decided; the conversations had dwelt on the general questions of Poland's place in post-war Europe.<sup>159</sup> In summarizing Mikolajczyk's visit, the *New York Times* reported that the Polish leader made a good impression as a moderate, sensible man with a sincere desire to reach an agreement with Stalin. However, the paper stressed that the visit "created a new atmosphere but did not create a new situation."<sup>160</sup>

In a dispatch to the delegate of the government in Poland dated June 21, Mikolajczyk summarized his dealings in Washington. He argued that the warmth of Roosevelt's welcome was proof of the importance the United States attached to Poland. In addition, Mikolajczyk stated that Roosevelt favored personal contacts in politics and desired a trip by Mikolajczyk to Moscow. Lastly, Mikolajczyk wrote confidently that Roosevelt "is against the Curzon line."<sup>161</sup>

Mikolajczyk, pleased with his meetings in Washington, prepared to return to London and the Polish Government-in-

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<sup>159</sup> *New York Times*, 15 June 1944. P.6.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> General Sikorski Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, 270.

exile. However, his most difficult task still lay ahead. On June 17, 1944 Roosevelt telegraphed Stalin requesting a meeting with the Pole.<sup>162</sup> Mikolajczyk, still wary of the conference, agreed to go only if he had Churchill's support as well.<sup>163</sup> Finally, when Churchill also encouraged him to meet with Stalin, Mikolajczyk agreed to go to Moscow. Stalin's position, which perplexed Roosevelt, did not come as a surprise to the Polish Prime Minister.

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<sup>162</sup> Loewenheim, ed. *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 543.

<sup>163</sup> Mikolajczyk to Roosevelt, 31 July 1944. PSF, FDR Library.

### The Aftermath

Roosevelt, in his telegram to Stalin, attempted to reassure the Soviet leader that he was not trying to interfere in Soviet policy. "I can assure you," Roosevelt wrote, "that no specific plan or proposal in any way affecting Polish-Soviet relations was drawn up... it is my firm belief that he [Mikolajczyk] would not hesitate to go to Moscow..."<sup>164</sup> Stalin, in a short reply on July 6, thanked the President for the information regarding the Prime Minister's trip, but stated he could not yet express an opinion on a trip by Mikolajczyk to Moscow. Stalin specified that although he wanted a strong and independent Poland, he could not resume relations until the Poles agreed to involve Polish officials from England, the United States, and the USSR in the new government. In addition, Stalin insisted that Mikolajczyk and his colleagues recognize the Curzon line as the new border between Poland and the Soviet Union.<sup>165</sup>

While Churchill and Roosevelt attempted to persuade Stalin to see Mikolajczyk, matters in Poland had accelerated rapidly. On July 25, 1944, the Soviet Army entered Lublin

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<sup>164</sup> Loewenheim, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 543.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 550.

and established contact with the Polish Committee of National Liberation. In a telegram to Churchill, Stalin reasoned that the Committee was setting up an administration on Polish territory in order to put Poland's affairs in order. The action was necessary, according to the Soviet leader, because he had not found any other forces which could have set up a Polish administration. "The so-called underground organisations, directed by the Polish government in London," Stalin insisted, "proved ephemeral and devoid of influence."<sup>166</sup> Churchill, eager to resolve the impasse, sent Stalin yet another telegram requesting that he meet with Mikolajczyk.

After receiving Churchill's message Stalin finally acquiesced to a meeting with the Polish leader. "I shall of course not refuse to receive him," Stalin answered.<sup>167</sup> Consequently, Mikolajczyk flew to Moscow the first week in August. However, Poland's chances for gaining independence were remote. Stalin had no intention of reconciling with the Polish Government in London and told the Premier that the Soviet government had come to an agreement with the Lublin group concerning the civil administration of Poland. He insisted from that point on he would deal only with one

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 556.

<sup>167</sup> Kimball, ed. *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 255.

Polish government, not two.<sup>168</sup> Stalin also refused Mikolajczyk's plea for military relief for the Polish Home Army because he was convinced the Polish military was unfriendly to the Red Army. Arguing his case, Mikolajczyk reminded Stalin of his own broadcast to his troops in January urging the Poles to avoid any conflicts with the Soviets.

However, Stalin could not be persuaded, and the talks with Mikolajczyk came to a standstill. Then, to make matters worse, the citizens and Polish soldiers in Warsaw took up arms against the Germans. As the Red Army approached Warsaw, in east-central Poland, the Nazi occupiers stepped up their reign of terror. Believing the Red Army would help free their city, the 40,000 Polish troops revolted against the Nazis. For weeks the Poles attempted to hold off the superior German forces while the Red Army stopped six miles from the city and refused to continue forward. A quarter of a million people were killed and wounded in the Warsaw Uprising, which ended only when the Polish Home Army surrendered. Subsequently the Soviets entered the ravaged city and began to install Communist-led local governments, in Warsaw and elsewhere. In a matter of days the Warsaw Uprising destroyed most of the city and paved the way for

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<sup>168</sup> Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, 206.



the Soviet Army to take control of Poland.<sup>169</sup> In Moscow, Mikolajczyk pleaded with the Allies to help his fellow countrymen. Aid to Warsaw, however, came slowly.

While Mikolajczyk was in the Soviet Union, Stalin suggested that the Prime Minister meet with Boleslaw Bierut, the leader of the Communist Poles, before he left. Bierut, like Stalin, was in no mood to compromise. The Communist Pole suggested that Mikolajczyk return to Poland in agreement with the Lublin Committee and, in return, Bierut would appoint him as a minister of a committee. "You are asking," Mikolajczyk replied, "for me to become a swine."<sup>170</sup> Mikolajczyk's protests, however, were useless. By the end of 1944 the Lublin Committee would proclaim itself the Provisional Government of Liberated Democratic Poland, and on January 5, 1945, the Soviets recognized the Lublin Committee as the legitimate government of Poland.

In the end, the meetings between Mikolajczyk and Roosevelt in June 1944 helped create the conditions for the Sovietization of Poland. Of course the meetings did not lead directly to a communist government in Warsaw, given the fact that the Red Army was driving into Poland and that Stalin was determined to control at least part of eastern Poland. There was little that a meeting between Mikolajczyk

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<sup>169</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 248-259.

<sup>170</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 75.

and Roosevelt could do in June of 1944 to prevent a Soviet take-over of Poland.

In the end, Roosevelt (along with Stalin) must take the lion's share of the blame for the Sovietization of Poland. This conclusion is based on the fact that Roosevelt, on several occasions in meetings with Mikolajczyk in June, either misled or lied to the Prime Minister. Roosevelt could have informed the Polish leader that the decisions on Poland's eastern border had already been made at Teheran. Roosevelt also could have told Mikolajczyk that if Stalin did not keep his promise of allowing a strong and independent government in Poland, the United States would refuse to recognize any government other than the London government-in-exile.

Roosevelt also could have advised Mikolajczyk to be more reasonable in light of the geopolitical conditions in Eastern Europe. The President could have taken a more vigorous pro-Polish stand against Stalin, backing Mikolajczyk's reasonable requests instead of refusing to mediate between Stalin and Mikolajczyk. Roosevelt put no pressure on Stalin on behalf of the Poles, the first and most severely punished victims of the war. In fact Roosevelt openly invited Stalin to turn the screws on Mikolajczyk by apologizing for the entreaty, explaining that it was

something he had to do because of the Polish-American vote, rather than demanding that Stalin meet and grant major concessions to the Polish leader.

In addition, Roosevelt was too uncritical of Stalin. His faith that Stalin would do the right thing led him to turn a blind eye to Mikolajczyk's warnings, the Katyn massacre, the Red Army's crackdown on the Polish Underground Army, and Stalin's refusal to aid Warsaw during the uprising in August. Roosevelt also did not listen to his top advisors concerning Stalin's motives in Poland. Kennan, Bohlen, and Harriman, at different times between 1943-1945, all warned the President of Stalin's goals for a post-war Poland. The President simply did not listen. As a result of Roosevelt's attitude, U.S. policy toward Poland was one of postponement, not action. Consequently Mikolajczyk lacked a strong ally to help in emancipating his country from Stalin's hands.<sup>171</sup>

Mikolajczyk, although he had his country's best interests at heart, must also share some of the blame for Poland's subjugation. He can be criticized for refusing to compromise with the Soviet Union under any circumstances. In

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<sup>171</sup> For dissenting views on Roosevelt's diplomacy concerning Stalin and Poland, see Warren Kimball's *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman*. Kimball writes that Roosevelt's attempt to cooperate with Stalin made more sense than the alternative confrontational approach. See also Arthur Schlesinger, JR's essay, "The Origins of the Cold War," in which Schlesinger argues Roosevelt followed a sound wartime policy based on international considerations. Similar interpretations can be found in Lloyd C. Gardner's *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* and James MacGregor Burns', *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom, 1940-1945*.

January of 1944 Churchill repeatedly urged Mikolajczyk to agree to the Curzon line before it was too late. He expressed to the Pole that if he would hurry and agree to the boundary proposal, Stalin's other proposals (namely the reorganization of the Polish government) could be "overridden." Mikolajczyk's refusal to concede infuriated the Englishman. "There will be no restoration of Polish-Soviet relations unless you consent to Russia's territorial demands," Churchill reiterated.<sup>172</sup> In February of 1944 Anthony Eden also pleaded with Mikolajczyk and the government-in-exile to admit to the inevitability of the Curzon line. Again the English received a resounding no. Mikolajczyk maintained that the underground army, which was determined to keep fighting, wanted to maintain Poland's territorial integrity.<sup>173</sup> Also, During the discussions in Washington Mikolajczyk consistently refused to agree to the Curzon line. He reminded Roosevelt that the Polish people equated the proposed border with Soviet injustices, and recalled the fact that Polish soldiers were giving their lives to save the land east of the line. The Polish Premier, perhaps to his country's detriment, was determined not to give in to any of Stalin's demands.

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<sup>172</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 52.

<sup>173</sup> Eden, *The Reckoning*, 508.

At Teheran Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin all agreed that moving Poland's boundaries to the west, at the expense of Germany, would be agreeable. Poland's new boundaries, if the Poles would assent, would extend from the Curzon line in the east to the Oder-Neisse River in the west. "I said," Churchill wrote, "I liked the picture (Poland between the Curzon Line and the Oder River), and that I would say to the Poles that if they did not accept it, they would be foolish...."<sup>174</sup> Silesia, the territory in the west, was to be given to Poland in exchange for the lost lands in the east. Mikolajczyk refused to agree to this alternative, although the coal-rich land of Silesia was far more valuable than either western Ukraine or western White Russia. Although Poland would eventually get Silesia at the Yalta Conference, the Polish government might have saved itself the sting of Stalin's wrath and gained the confidence of America and England if it had agreed sooner to the Curzon line.

Roosevelt, like Churchill, also urged Mikolajczyk to make some concessions to Stalin concerning the make-up of the Polish government. The "unavoidable," according to the President, could no longer be ignored. Throughout the week of meetings, Roosevelt pressed Mikolajczyk to reconstitute the Polish government. During their last meeting on June 14 the President emphasized that concessions were unavoidable,

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<sup>174</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 162.

and reminded the Pole that "there are five times more Russians than Poles." He cautioned that Russia was "a neighboring power which could swallow up Poland if she could not reach an understanding on her terms."<sup>175</sup> However, Roosevelt reiterated that he did not believe Russia wanted to destroy Poland. Roosevelt later advised that, "It might be advisable to find some way of making changes in the personnel of the government if this were to lead to understanding with the Soviets."<sup>176</sup>

Mikolajczyk, despite Roosevelt's and Churchill's requests, continued to refuse to reorganize his government. This refusal to bargain with Stalin served only to anger the Soviet leader more. Only when relations with the Soviet Union reached a breaking point in August of 1944 did Mikolajczyk finally agree to compromise. By then, however, it was too late; the Red Army had slowly positioned itself on land west of the Curzon line, and the Polish Committee of National Liberation had been taking control of local governments as the Nazis retreated. Mikolajczyk finally agreed to accept the Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet

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<sup>175</sup> Sikorski Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, 267 and Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, 294.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

boundary on one condition: that Lwow would remain on the Polish side of the border. Stalin refused.<sup>177</sup>

The Soviets, tired of dealing with the "hostile" London Poles, were in no mood to begin making concessions to Mikolajczyk and his London government. It was clear that the defeat of Germany was inevitable, and it was also clear that Poland's western allies were not going to take a firm stand on either Poland's borders or its government. The stage was already set for a Soviet-run Poland. George Kennan wrote in July, 1944 that the Russians were having unparalleled success on the battlefields. "They will be confident that they can arrange the affairs of Eastern Europe to their own liking without great difficulties, and they will not be inclined to go far out of their way either for the Poles or for us."<sup>178</sup> In a speech to the House of Commons on October 27 Churchill stated that "If the Polish Government had taken the advice we tendered them at the beginning of this year, the additional complication produced by the formation of the Polish National Committee of Lublin would not have arisen..."<sup>179</sup> If Mikolajczyk would have agreed to Soviet

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<sup>177</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 99.

<sup>178</sup> Kennan, *Memoirs*, 206.

<sup>179</sup> Rhodes, *The Complete Speeches of Winston Churchill*, Vol. A *Time of Triumph*, 7016.

demands sooner there is a possibility he could have saved at least part of Poland from Stalin's greed.

Despite the fact that Mikolajczyk can be criticized for not yielding earlier in 1944, it is doubtful that he could have persuaded his government in London to agree to make any concessions. The Prime Minister admitted that his own government had criticized him for attempting to reconcile with Stalin in August. "I explained to them," he wrote, "that they were on the verge of being cut off from the Polish people by the threatened recognition of the Lublin group by all major powers."<sup>180</sup> The fact that Mikolajczyk finally agreed to discuss frontier questions troubled his fellow compatriots in Poland.<sup>181</sup>

Churchill realized that Mikolajczyk's hands were tied, and wrote Roosevelt voicing his concern. "There is the further difficulty that three of the four parties represented in the Polish Government, i.e., all except the Peasant party, refuse to authorise Monsieur Mikolajczyk to go as far as we would have wished."<sup>182</sup> Even if Mikolajczyk decided to make concessions to Stalin in late 1943 or early 1944, it is doubtful that his government would have

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>181</sup> Eden, *The Reckoning*, 508.

<sup>182</sup> Loewenheim, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 446. Mikolajczyk was the leader of the Polish Peasant Party.



acquiesced. As W. Averell Harriman, U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union wrote in 1944, Mikolajczyk's cabinet colleagues "equated any concession to the Soviet Union with national dishonor."<sup>183</sup> The Polish officials, in Kennan's words, were "the doomed representatives of a doomed regime."<sup>184</sup>

Mikolajczyk, if he had wanted to guarantee Roosevelt's public support of Poland, made one crucial mistake during his stay in Washington. Before the Prime Minister arrived in the United States he had agreed not to talk extensively to the press or make public speeches. In addition, Mikolajczyk agreed not to meet with any groups of Polish-Americans.<sup>185</sup> Roosevelt was afraid of the seven million Polish-Americans, who according to Roosevelt, voted as a cohesive unit. The election of 1944 was only five months away, and Roosevelt wanted to avoid both bad publicity concerning American-Polish relations and any negative political repercussions. As a result Mikolajczyk was asked not to speak to these groups, as he might influence their opinions. Mikolajczyk complied to the wishes of U.S. officials, and in doing so, left a vital source of assistance untapped. The Polish Premier was a popular figure among Poles, both in Poland and

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<sup>183</sup> W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin* (New York: Random House, 1975), 201.

<sup>184</sup> Kennan, *Memoirs*, 208.

<sup>185</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Vol. 3: The British Commonwealth and Europe*, 1272.

the United States. Consequently, Mikolajczyk could have rallied American-Poles to put political pressure on Roosevelt. The Pole knew that the election was in the forefront of Roosevelt's mind. Several times during their meetings the President mentioned he had yet to react to the Polish situation because of the upcoming election. Mikolajczyk could have used the President's concerns to his advantage despite the risk of alienating Roosevelt.

Despite Mikolajczyk's unwillingness to bargain with Stalin and his failure to rally Polish-American voters, there was nothing substantial that the Prime Minister could have done during his stay in America to persuade Roosevelt to take stronger action in Poland. The country's fate had already been decided by a President who was too intent on becoming friends with Stalin to see Stalin's true intentions and too proud to listen to his top advisors. In addition, Roosevelt made broad, sweeping promises to Mikolajczyk, promises he could not keep. As Anthony Eden wrote, "The President will do nothing for the Poles, any more than Mr. Hull did at Moscow or the President himself did at Teheran. The poor Poles are sadly deluding themselves if they place any faith in these vague and generous promises."<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Eden, *The Reckoning*, 539.

During his week in Washington Mikolajczyk complained that the Allies were deciding Poland's fate without his involvement. Mikolajczyk's fears that Churchill and Roosevelt were deciding Poland's fate were justified. In the months leading up to Teheran, Roosevelt, through his onetime ambassador to Russia, Joseph Davies, hinted to Stalin that the United States would be willing to concede the Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet border in order to improve relations with the Soviet leader. In addition, in March of 1943 Roosevelt told Anthony Eden that at the appropriate time Britain, the United States and Russia would decide on a solution. Poland would have to accept it. Then, in an attempt to convince Stalin to meet with him and Churchill in November, Roosevelt again hinted he would agree to the Curzon line.<sup>187</sup> Mikolajczyk was never told of these concessions before or during his trip to Washington.

At Teheran itself major decisions concerning Poland were once again discussed without Mikolajczyk's knowledge or participation. Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin, poring over maps of Poland, concluded that the Curzon line in the east and the Oder River in the west would be acceptable borders for Poland. The city of Lwow, which had never been part of the Soviet Union but was east of the so-called Curzon line, was not mentioned, but Churchill for one was hoping he could

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<sup>187</sup> Eubank, *Summit at Teheran*, 115.

convince Stalin to concede it in order to make the agreement more palatable to the Poles.

On the last day of the Teheran Conference, Roosevelt met privately with Stalin. Roosevelt admitted to the Soviet that he was wary of losing the Polish-American voters and could not publicly take part in an agreement on Poland. However, according to Charles Bohlen who was present at the meeting, Roosevelt "dismayed" Bohlen by stating he personally agreed with Stalin's general view that Poland's frontiers should be moved to the west.<sup>188</sup> Stalin knew the President would not contest his demands on Poland.

It was not the first time that Roosevelt admitted he would not contest the Curzon line. According to Keith Eubank, author of *Summit at Teheran*, on September 3, 1943, almost nine months before his assurances to Mikolajczyk, the President told Cardinal Spellman that there was no point opposing Stalin's desires in Poland because "he had the power to get them anyhow."<sup>189</sup>

When the Polish Prime Minister arrived in the United States in 1944, he was confident he could convince Roosevelt not to let the Soviet Union annex eastern Poland. Roosevelt's words of encouragement increased Mikolajczyk's confidence. But the decision over borders had already been

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<sup>188</sup> Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 157.

<sup>189</sup> Eubank, *Summit at Teheran*, 360.

made without Mikolajczyk's approval. He was never notified by Roosevelt nor any other American official during his stay in the United States. When Mikolajczyk met with Roosevelt, and then Cordell Hull, in June 1944 he had no knowledge of the border decisions or of the Lwow issue. When he complained to Stettinius that Poland was being shut out of the negotiations on its future he was even closer to the truth than he realized.

Roosevelt's rhetoric concerning Teheran, however, led Mikolajczyk to believe the Curzon line issue was still undecided. For instance, during their first meeting in June Roosevelt told the Prime Minister that Churchill alone had agreed to the Curzon line. He criticized Churchill for his actions and went on to describe the difficulties that were created for him by Churchill.<sup>190</sup> But the President did not mention his own actions affirming the line. In addition, when Mikolajczyk asked the President if he thought the Poles should accept the Soviet territorial demand, Roosevelt replied, "You should avoid any final or definite settlement of the frontiers now."<sup>191</sup> The President also reassured Mikolajczyk that, "I am still opposed to dividing Poland

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<sup>190</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 222.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

with this line."<sup>192</sup> Encouraged by Roosevelt's words, Mikolajczyk continued to refuse the Curzon line, not knowing the American reassurances were meaningless. The Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet boundary had already been decided upon.

Mikolajczyk was further encouraged by Roosevelt's rhetoric over the upcoming election in America. The President made it clear repeatedly that he was unwilling to settle Polish border issues until after November. He stated that as a "fellow democrat" Mikolajczyk could understand why he was refraining from agreeing to any settlements.<sup>193</sup> Once again, Mikolajczyk, encouraged by the President's promises, believed that the Curzon line was not inevitable and continued to reject Stalin's demands.

It was only during his trip to Moscow, two months after his meetings with Roosevelt, and nine months after the conference at Teheran, that Mikolajczyk found out the truth about the conference. Although Churchill was also present during the Moscow meetings, Mikolajczyk discovered the truth only during an argument with Molotov. When Mikolajczyk continued to oppose the Curzon line Molotov exploded, "All this was settled at Teheran!"<sup>194</sup> Then, looking to Harriman and Churchill, Molotov continued,

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<sup>192</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 59.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 96.

If your memories fail you, let me recall the facts to you. We all agreed at Teheran that the Curzon line must divide Poland. You will recall that President Roosevelt agreed to this solution and strongly endorsed the line. And then we all agreed that it would be best not to issue any public declaration about our agreement.<sup>195</sup>

In his book, *The Rape of Poland*, Mikolajczyk recalled the moment. "Shocked, and remembering the assurances I had personally had from Roosevelt at the White House, I looked at Churchill and Harriman, silently begging them to call this damnable deal a lie."<sup>196</sup> Harriman did not object to Molotov's statement and when Churchill quietly confirmed it with a nod, Mikolajczyk stared dumbfounded. Then, in a heated argument with Churchill following the meeting, Mikolajczyk railed against the betrayal by his allies. "I am not a person whose patriotism is diluted to the point where I would give away half my country!"<sup>197</sup> However, Roosevelt and Churchill, with their acknowledgment to Stalin of the Curzon line, forced Mikolajczyk into a corner. Defeated and dejected, he reluctantly agreed to return to his government and try to reach a decision. An agreement would never materialize.

Aside from Roosevelt's commitment at Teheran, he was vague and noncommittal concerning Poland's problems. The

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 98.

writing was on the wall, but Mikolajczyk either did not see it or chose to ignore it. For example, numerous times Roosevelt stunned the Pole with his refusal to commit to a decision, and with his use of ambiguous terms. The President mentioned in his speech on June 7 that they should be "getting away from the mere questions of whether this town will be on this side of the line or that side of the line."<sup>198</sup> He also refused to get directly involved with negotiations between Mikolajczyk and Stalin, saying he would rather be a "moderator," which, he argued, differed from the official title of "mediator." Furthermore, Roosevelt's choice of words clearly showed his noncommittal stand. He said that Poland must do the "practical thing" and refrain from discussing small details, such as "the boundaries of the two countries." Clearly Roosevelt was keeping himself at arm's length. Mikolajczyk, perhaps to his detriment, did not press the President or insist on clearer terms.

Roosevelt's vagueness and inability to commit were typical of the President's foreign policy. As Charles Bohlen stated, the President relied on an instinct that resulted in a "lack of precision."<sup>199</sup> Eubank writes that Roosevelt regarded "detailed planning as prophecies by prophets who

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<sup>198</sup> Toast of the President, 7 June 1944, FDR Speech Files, FDR Library.

<sup>199</sup> Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 211.



cannot be infallible."<sup>200</sup> This was Roosevelt's attitude toward Poland. His policy was inconsistent and capricious. The constant postponement of the Polish problem and avoidance of making specific decisions only hurt Mikolajczyk's government.

Robert Ferrell, in *The Dying President: Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-1945*, wrote that Roosevelt suffered from a basic weakness in foreign policy: His knowledge of foreign countries was, according to Ferrell, minute. "A deeper knowledge of history," Ferrell argues, "and the reactions of foreign peoples, would have helped."<sup>201</sup> Roosevelt's foreign policy towards Poland was no different. As Roosevelt stated himself in 1942, "...I am perfectly willing to mislead and tell untruths if it will help win the war."<sup>202</sup> Unfortunately, these untruths led Mikolajczyk down a dead-end road.

Perhaps Roosevelt's ultimate failure with Poland lay in his curious faith in the Soviet leader. Mikolajczyk first noticed the President's faith in Stalin during their conferences. "Stalin is a realist," Roosevelt announced. "And we mustn't forget, when we judge Russian actions, that

<sup>200</sup> Eubank, *Summit at Teheran*, 359.

<sup>201</sup> Robert Ferrell, *The Dying President: Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-1945* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 106-107.

<sup>202</sup> Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 7.

the Soviet regime has had only two years of experience in international relations. But of one thing I am certain, Stalin is not an imperialist."<sup>203</sup> According to Dennis J. Dunn, author of *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow*, Roosevelt believed that the United States and the Soviet Union were on convergent paths. The United States was moving from laissez-faire capitalism to welfare state socialism, while Soviet Russia was moving from totalitarianism to social democracy.<sup>204</sup> As a result of Roosevelt's belief in this convergence, Dunn argues that he ignored the proof of Stalin's cruelty, expansion, and suspicion. Roosevelt's confidence in Stalin directly influenced his inept Polish policies.

Roosevelt agreed to meet with Mikolajczyk only to appease Polish-American voters, and to give Mikolajczyk the impression the United States genuinely cared about the events in East Europe. However, the President never had any intention of granting guarantees to the Prime Minister or insisting that Stalin remove his troops from eastern Poland. As Dunn states, Roosevelt's major concern was not Poland, but the Soviet Union. The President wanted to make sure relations between the U.S. and the USSR were friendly and free of suspicion. Consequently Roosevelt avoided any

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<sup>203</sup> Mikolajczyk, *Rape of Poland*, 59.

<sup>204</sup> Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 3.

argument with Stalin over Poland in the hope of creating a more intimate relationship. As Eubank writes, Roosevelt was not going to allow his new friendship with Stalin to be thwarted by a mere frontier.<sup>205</sup> As a result American policy toward the Soviet Union was one of patience and tolerance.<sup>206</sup> This permissiveness on the part of Roosevelt allowed Stalin to gain control of Poland without the permission of the Polish government or Mikolajczyk. In fact, the Prime Minister, throughout 1943 and 1944 never suspected the depth of Roosevelt's faith in the Soviet Union. He believed that the President's assurances to Poland were honest and sincere. Even if Roosevelt had made the promises to Mikolajczyk in good faith, the fact remains that they were clouded with Roosevelt's belief in the convergent theory.<sup>207</sup>

Perhaps if Roosevelt had taken into consideration the advice of his top advisors he might have seen Stalin's true nature. Despite advice from men such as Kennan and Harriman, Roosevelt bypassed his foreign policy professionals. Kennan and Harriman both expressed concern over Stalin's demands in Poland. Harriman was convinced that Stalin wanted and needed weak neighbors. When Stalin would not let American and

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<sup>205</sup> Eubank, *Summit at Teheran*, 361.

<sup>206</sup> Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 5.

<sup>207</sup> To read more on the Roosevelt's theory of convergence, read Dennis J. Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow*, pages 1-10.

British planes use Russian-controlled air bases in Eastern Europe to aid Warsaw, Harriman became concerned. He wrote Roosevelt that, "For the first time since coming to Moscow I am gravely concerned by the attitude of the Soviet Government in its refusal to permit us to assist the Poles in Warsaw as well as in its own policy of apparent inactivity."<sup>208</sup> In addition Harriman, once hopeful of U.S.-Soviet relations, warned the President that, "these men [the Soviets] are bloated with power and expect that they can force their will on us and all countries to accept their decisions without questions."<sup>209</sup>

Kennan, on the other hand, attributed Stalin's demands as a way to camouflage past Soviet deeds. Stalin wanted to get rid of the London Poles because he was trying to ensure that the post-war officials in Poland would not probe into the Soviet's past misdeeds.<sup>210</sup> In other words, Stalin wanted no one to know the truth behind the Katyn forest massacre. Kennan, always mistrustful of Stalin, warned Roosevelt time and again of Stalin's deceit and of his plans for post-war Poland. Kennan believed that lend-lease aid could have been used in 1944 to help Eastern Europe, including Poland.

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<sup>208</sup> Harriman to Roosevelt, 15 August 1944, PSF, FDR Library and Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin*, 230.

<sup>209</sup> Harriman to Roosevelt, 17 August 1944, PSF, FDR Library.

<sup>210</sup> Kennan, *Memoirs*, 203 and Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 19.

Kennan argued that by holding delivery of money and supplies over Stalin's head Roosevelt could have forced the Soviet leader to moderate his Polish demands. Kennan held that there was no reason for the United States to continue its program of indiscriminate aid to the Soviet Union when there was reason to doubt Stalin's motives in Eastern Europe.<sup>211</sup> His views were ignored by Washington.

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<sup>211</sup> Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, 86.

## Epilogue

The end of 1944 only proved more tragic for Poland. When his government would not agree to any concessions, Mikolajczyk was forced to realize that a compromise between the London and Lublin Poles could never be reached. Consequently on November 24, 1944, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk resigned his position as Prime Minister of Poland.

Events for Poland progressed rapidly after Mikolajczyk's resignation. After the Soviets recognized the Lublin Committee as the legitimate government in Poland the Allies found themselves in a precarious position. Great Britain and the United States still recognized the Polish government-in-exile; the Soviet Union recognized the Polish Provisional Government in Poland; the Lublin Poles favored the Curzon line; the London Poles flatly refused even to discuss its existence. It was in this quagmire that the Allies found themselves when the Yalta conference convened on February 3, 1945.

At Yalta, Stalin held all of the aces concerning Poland. His troops were occupying the most of the country, and his proteges were controlling the local governments. The Western leaders' position was weak and Roosevelt and Churchill knew it. The decisions made at Yalta, heralded by

the Allied leaders as a triumphant compromise, outraged the London Poles. Their official announcement read:

As a result of our discussion, we have agreed on the conditions in which a new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity may be formed with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad the eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon line....<sup>212</sup>

In the end, the Soviet Union obtained the Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet boundary as well as the important city of Lwow. For Poland, Yalta was the final death blow. Their five year struggle had resulted in six and a half million dead and an economy devastated by six long years of war. Instead of the free and independent Poland so often promised by the Allied leaders, Poles faced more oppression and devastation, this time by a totalitarian system under Soviet control.

Roosevelt would not live to see the results of his foreign policy in Poland. On April 12, 1945 he died in Warm Springs, Georgia of cardiovascular disease. His successor, Harry S. Truman, along with Winston Churchill, gave up on Poland. The damage had already been done. In July, 1945 the Allied powers withdrew recognition from the London Poles and granted it to the Lublin regime.

Mikolajczyk, in a last attempt to save the remnants of democracy in Poland, joined the Russian backed provisional

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<sup>212</sup> Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy*, 348-349.

government as Minister of Agriculture in June 1945. However, he was forced to flee Poland two years later as the Communists completely consolidated their position. Because Mikolajczyk continued the Peasant's Party demands for freedom and democracy, a military court in Warsaw was instructed to try Mikolajczyk and sentence him to death.<sup>213</sup>

In October of 1947 the former Prime Minister escaped from Poland on a delivery truck into Germany, where he was reunited with his wife and son, both of whom had been in German concentration camps.<sup>214</sup> On October 29 the British Royal Air Force flew the family to England. Mikolajczyk, branded a traitor by the Communist Poles, and banished from Poland for life, never saw his country again. He died in the United States on December 14, 1966, nearly twenty-five years before Poland was to recover its independence.

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<sup>213</sup> Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, 240.

<sup>214</sup> New York Times, 29 May 1945. P.6.



## Poland in 1945

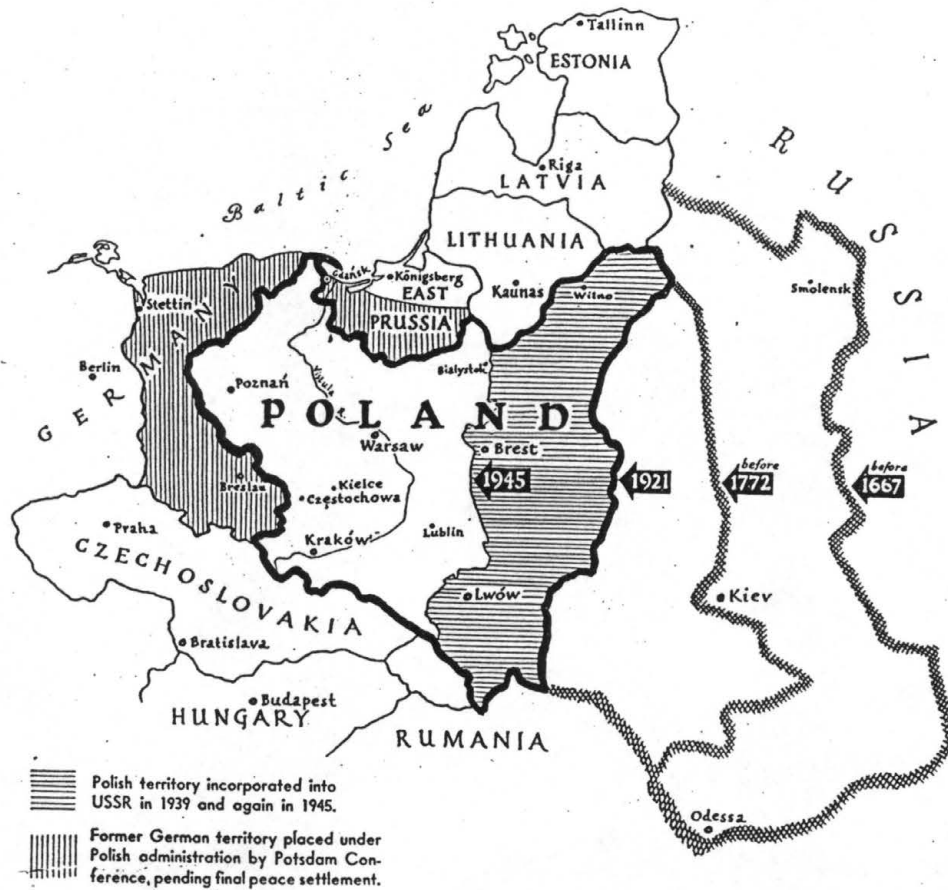


Fig. 2. Poland's reduction in territory from 1667 to 1945. Source: Arthur Bliss Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed: An American Ambassador Reports to the American People* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948, 257).

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