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NOTES ON MEETING AT YALTA BETWEEN THE BIG THREE
4-8 P.M., FEBRUARY 8

PRESENT

Americans:

The President
The Secretary of State
Ambassador Harriman
Mr. Harry Hopkins
Justice Byrnes
Mr. Bohlen
Mr. Matthews
Mr. Hiss

British:

The Prime Minister
Mr. Eden
Sir Alexander Cadogan
Ambassador Clark Kerr
Sir Edward Bridges (Secretary of War Cabinet)
Interpreter
Mr. Bob Dixon
Mr. Jeffrey Wilson
Mr. Gladwyn Jebb

Russians:

Marshal Stalin
Mr. Molotov
Mr. Vyshinski
Mr. Maisky
Ambassador Gromyko
Ambassador Gousev
Mr. Pavlov (interpreter)

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(The first part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the voting procedure for the world organization. This is covered in Mr. Hiss's notes.)

POLAND

President:

I should like to bring up Poland. I come from a great distance and therefore have the advantage of a more distant point of view of the problem. There are six

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or seven million Poles in the United States. As I said in Tehran, in general I am in favor of the Curzon line. Most Poles, like the Chinese, want to save face.

Stalin:

(interrupting) Who will save face, the Poles in Poland or the emigre Poles?

President:

The Poles would like East Prussia and part of Germany. It would make it easier for me at home if the Soviet Government could give something to Poland. I raised the question of giving them Lvov at Tehran. It has now been suggested that the oil lands in the southwest of Lvov might be given them. I am not making a definite statement but I hope that Marshal Stalin can make a gesture in this direction.

But the most important matter is that of a permanent government for Poland. Opinion in the United States is against recognition of the Lublin government on the ground that it represents a small portion of the Polish people. What people want is the creation of a government of national unity to settle their internal differences. A government which would represent all five major parties (names them) is what is wanted. It may interest Marshal Stalin that I do not know any of the London or of the Lublin government. Mikolajczyk came to Washington and I was greatly impressed by him. I felt that he was an honest man.

The main suggestion I want to make is that there be created an ad interim government which will have the support of the majority of the Polish people. There are many ways of creating such a government. One of the many suggestions is the possibility of creating a presidency council made up of a small number of men who would be the controlling force ad interim to set up a more permanent government. I make this suggestion as from the distance of three thousand miles. Sometimes distance is an advantage. We want a Poland that will be thoroughly friendly to the Soviet for years to come. This is essential.

Stalin:

(interrupting) Friendly not only to the Soviet but all three allies.

President:

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President:

This is my only suggestion. If we can work out some solution of this problem it will make peace much easier.

Prime Minister:

I have made repeated declarations in Parliament in support of the Soviet claims to the Curzon line, that is to say, leaving Lvov with Soviet Russia. I have been much criticized and so has Mr. Eden especially by the party which I represent. But I have always considered that after all Russia has suffered in fighting Germany and after all her efforts in liberating Poland her claim is one founded not on force but on right. In that position I abide. But of course if the mighty power, the Soviet Union, made a gesture of magnanimity to a much weaker power and made the gesture suggested by the President we would heartily acclaim such action.

However, I am more interested in the question of Poland's sovereign independence and freedom that in particular frontier lines. I want the Poles to have a home in Europe and to be free to live their own life there. That is an objective which I have always heard Marshal Stalin proclaim with the utmost firmness. It is because I put my trust in his declaration about the sovereign independence and freedom of Poland that the frontier question I consider not of supreme importance. This is what is dear to the hearts of the nation of Britain. This is what we went to war against Germany for--that Poland should be free and sovereign. Everyone here knows the result it was to us unprepared as we were and that it nearly cost us our life as a nation. Great Britain had no material interest in Poland. Her interest is only one of honor because we drew the sword for Poland against Hitler's brutal attack. Never could I be content with any solution that would not leave Poland as a free and independent state. However, I have one qualification: I do not think that the freedom of Poland could be made to cover hostile designs by any Polish government, perhaps by intrigue with Germany, against the Soviet. I cannot conceive that the world organization would ever tolerate such action or leave it only to Soviet Russia to take proper measures. Our most earnest desire which we care about as much as our lives is that Poland be mistress in her own house and in her own soul. I earnestly hope that we shall not separate without taking a practical step with this objective. At the present time there are two governments about

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which we differ. I have never seen any of the present London government. We recognize them but have not sought their company. But Mikolajczyk, Romer and Grabaki are men of good sense and we have confidence in them. We remain in informal but friendly contact with them. There will be great criticism against us all if we let them divide us when we have such great tasks and common hopes. Can we not make a government here in Poland. A provisional or interim government, as the President said, pending free elections so that all three of us can extend recognition as well as the other United Nations. Can we not pave the way for a free future on the future constitution and administration of Poland? If we could do that we should leave the table with one great step accomplished toward future peace and the prosperity of Central Europe. I am sure that effective guarantees can be laid down to secure the line of communications of the victorious Red Army in its battle to defeat Germany. His Majesty's Government cordially support the President's suggestion and present the question to our Russian allies.

(Stalin suggests a ten-minute intermission.)

Stalin:

The Prime Minister has said that for Great Britain the question of Poland is a question of honor. For Russia it is not only a question of honor but also of security. It is a question of honor for Russia for we shall have to eliminate many things from the books. But it is also a question of security of the state not only because we are on Poland's frontier but also because throughout history Poland has always been a corridor for attack on Russia. It is sufficient that during the last thirty years our German enemy has passed through this corridor twice. This is because Poland was weak. It is in the Russian interest as well as that of Poland that Poland be strong and powerful and in a position in her own and in our interests to shut the corridor by her own forces. The corridor cannot be mechanically shut from outside by Russia. It could be shut from inside only by Poland. It is necessary that Poland be free, independent and powerful. It is not only a question of honor but of life and death for the Soviet State. That is why Russia today is against the Czarist policy of abolition of Poland. We have completely changed this inhuman policy and started a policy of friendship and independence for Poland. This is the basis of our policy and we favor a strong independent Poland.

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I refer now to our allies appeal with regard to the Curzon line. The President has suggested modification, giving Poland Lvov and Lvov Province. The Prime Minister thinks that we should make a gesture of magnanimity. But I must remind you that the Curzon line was invented not by Russians but by foreigners. The Curzon line of Curzon was made by Curzon, Clemenceau and the Americans in 1918-1919. Russia was not invited and did not participate. This line was accepted against the will of the Russians on the basis of ethnological data. Lenin opposed it. He did not want to give ~~the~~ Bialystok and Bialystok Provinces to Poland but the Curzon line gives them to Poland. We have retreated from Lenin's position. Some want us to be less Russian than Curzon and Clemenceau. What will the Russians say at Moscow and the Ukrainians? They will say that Stalin and Molotov are far less defenders of Russia than Curzon and Clemenceau. I cannot take such a position and return to Moscow. I prefer that the war continue a little longer and give Poland compensation in the west at the expense of Germany. I asked Mikolajczyk what frontier he wanted. Mikolajczyk was delighted to hear of a western frontier to the river Neiss. I must say that I will maintain this line and ask this conference to support it. There are two Neiss rivers. The east and the west. I favor the west.

Now about the government. The Prime Minister has said that he wants to create a Polish government here. I am afraid that was a slip of the tongue. Without the participation of Poles we can create no Polish government. They all say that I am a dictator but I have enough democratic feeling not to set up a Polish government without Poles. It must be with participation of Poles. We had the opportunity in Moscow to create a Polish government with Poles. Both London and Lublin groups met in Moscow and certain points of agreement were reached. Mikolajczyk returned to London and was kicked out of the government. The present London government of Archuchuski, which is in reality under the President Brachewicz. All these people were against the agreement and hostile to the idea. They called the Lublin government "bandits" and "traitors." Naturally the Lublin government paid the same coin to the London government. It is difficult to bring them together. The principal personalities, Beirut, Osobka, Morawski, won't hear of the London government. I ask what kind of concessions can be made. They can tolerate Grabski and General Jelikowski but they won't hear of Mikolajczyk.

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Under these circumstances I am prepared to support any attempt to create unity if there is some chance of success. I am prepared to call the Warsaw Poles here or better to see them in Moscow. But frankly, the Warsaw government has as great a democratic basis in Poland as de Gaulle has in France.

Now as a military man I must say what I demand of a country liberated by the Red Army. First there should be peace and quiet in the wake of the army. The men of the Red Army are indifferent as to what kind of government there is in Poland but they do want one that will maintain order behind the lines. The Lublin Warsaw government fulfils this role not badly. There are agents of the London government connected with the so-called underground. They are called resistance forces. We have had nothing good from them but much evil. So far their agents have killed 212 Russian military men. They have attacked supply bases for arms. It was announced that all wireless stations must be registered but these forces continued to break all the laws of war and complained of being arrested. If they attack the Red Army any more they will be shot. When I compare the agents of both governments I find that the Lublin ones are useful and the others the contrary. The military must have peace and quiet. The military will support such a government and I cannot do otherwise. Such is the situation.

(The President says that it is now quarter to eight and that the meeting should adjourn.)

Prime Minister:

I must put on record that both the British and Soviet governments have different sources of information in Poland and get different facts. Perhaps we are mistaken but I do not feel that the Lublin government represents even one third of the Polish people. This is my honest opinion and I may be wrong. Still, I have felt that the underground might have collisions with the Lublin government. I have feared bloodshed, arrests, deportation, and I fear the effect on the whole Polish question. Anyone who attacks the Red Army should be punished but I cannot feel that the Lublin government has any right to represent the Polish nation.

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