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February 3, 1944

Paraphrase of Embassy's Telegram No. 361, February 3, to the Department of State

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Summary:

Clark Kerr and Joseph Stalin discuss issues with the Polish government and the future of Poland after World War II.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

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Continued 171, W.A.
Herrina collector, LCC

Telegram re

British Mtg w Stalin

PARAPHRASE of Embassy's telegram No. 361, February 3, to the Department of State.

For the President and the Secretary. Personal and Secret.

Shortly after I saw Stalin and Molotov last night the British Ambassador called on them. As Clark Kerr had submitted the Prime Minister's views on the Polish question in writing the day before, these were familiar to Stalin. In a conversation which lasted nearly two hours, Stalin first told the British Ambassador that he would reply to Mr. Churchill soon by cable, and then proceeded to analyze and discuss the subject.

The British Ambassador last night told me the substance of his conversation, but I have not yet seen his report on it to the Prime Minister and Mr. Eden. The Prime Minister, I assume, will be cabling you about it and that Stalin's reply when received will be repeated to you. The following is an outline of what Clark Kerr told me and is being communicated to you for your preliminary information.

After expressing appreciation of the Prime Minister's interest in trying to find a settlement, Stalin stated there were two points which must be understood in connection with the Polish matter.

1. The boundary question. Stalin said that in offering the Curzon Line as a basis for settlement the Soviet Government had made a concession to the Poles. He stated that the Curzon Line was considered fair by the British Government and that everyone seemed to agree except the Poles. On the other hand, the Polish Government in London talked consistently of the Riga Line, which had been established by force and was known to be unjust. Therefore he considered that the Polish Government should accept the Curzon Line.

2. The Polish Government in London. It was stated by Stalin that he could recognize the Polish Government in London as now constituted, but he knew it would act in such a way that within a very few weeks relations would have to be broken off again. He said that the underground movement, acting under orders from London, was unwilling to cooperate with the Red Army and was killing partisans. Stalin produced a pamphlet dated July 1943 which he said was published by the Polish underground in Vilna. The words "Hitler and Stalin, two faces of the same evil" formed the headline across this pamphlet. He said that this was typical of the

Poles

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Document of a part and copies to Clark
EO 12958, Sec. 1.2
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Polish attitude, and it was therefore obvious that, before the Polish Government could be dealt with, it would have to be reorganized.

Clark Kerr asked Marshal Stalin specifically which individuals he felt must be eliminated from the Polish Government. Although Stalin was not prepared to commit himself without further study, he mentioned three names: Kot, Kukiek, and Sosnkowski, and he emphasized his particular distrust of the last named.

Stalin questioned the legality of the present Polish Government in London, when the British Ambassador stated that the Prime Minister did not wish to involve himself in its reorganization and that to do so would be an interference with sovereign rights. Stalin commented that the last elected President, Moscicki, was now in Switzerland taking out Swiss naturalization papers and that President Raczkiewicz has not been elected by the Polish people. Other governments changed from time to time, including the British Government. The Polish Government would sink into the same disrepute as the Yugoslav Government unless it were reorganized. Stalin felt that the opinion of the Polish people, of whom he spoke in a friendly manner, was not expressed by the Government in London. About a year ago Eden had told Maisky that he doubted whether the governments in exile, except the Czech Government, would return to their countries without basic reconstruction. Stalin insisted that new men who were "democratic, anti-fascist and pro-ally" must be brought into the Polish Government. The British Ambassador strongly defended Romer and believes he convinced Stalin that Romer was genuinely anxious to establish relations with the Soviet Union which would be permanently satisfactory.

The following questions to which the Polish Government had requested an answer were submitted to Stalin by Clark Kerr:

1. Would Poland be liberated by the Red Army?
Stalin replied in the affirmative.

2. Would Poles east of the Curzon Line be permitted to migrate west by the Soviet Government? To this Stalin answered yes, and added that permission to move east should be granted to the Ukrainians west of the line.

3. After liberation would a democratic election be permitted by the Soviet Government? Stalin's reply was affirmative.

4. Would a defensive alliance with Poland against

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Germany be agreed to by the Soviet Union? Yes if the Poles wish it, was Stalin's answer.

Stalin was friendly but firm and definite throughout the conversation. Clark Kerr received the impression that, provided of course the Curzon Line was accepted as the basis for boundary settlement, the Soviet Government would recognize the Polish Government in London if that Government could be induced to effect a reconstitution by eliminating the individuals most objectionable to the Soviets. Although Stalin manifested a firm determination not to establish relations with a Government he could not trust, he indicated no desire to "hand pick" a new Polish Government.

After I had concluded discussion on military matters during my own conversation with Stalin earlier in the evening, I mentioned your interest in and concern over the Polish question. Emphasizing its importance to us, I said that, as you had expressed it at Tehran, it was your hope Stalin could find a solution to the matter.

The Vilna pamphlet was shown me by Stalin, who expressed himself forcibly against Sosnkowski and the underground movement, and he covered some of the ground he later developed with Clark Kerr. However, he indicated a friendly attitude toward the Polish people and, although not specifying names, towards some of the members of the present Polish Government. Stalin said that Mikolajczyk is weak and under the control of Sosnkowski but that when Sikorski was alive he (Sikorski) had controlled the Government.

Marshal Stalin feels he expressed his point of view plainly at Tehran and does not believe he is taking unilateral action. He considers that he has made concessions to the Poles, and that now it is up to the Poles to deal in justice and good faith with him. He asked why the Red Army should bleed to put these people into power and give them the rule of territory that was forcibly taken from Russia.

I told Stalin that I only wanted to remind him of your keen interest in his finding a solution -- and had not come that evening for the purpose of discussing the Polish question. He appeared anxious that you should understand his point of view and was ready to discuss any aspect of the matter with me. Stalin's belief is that his position is justified and is fair.

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