

## **February 29, 1944**

### **Message Received from British Ambassador**

#### **Citation:**

"Message Received from British Ambassador", February 29, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Container # 171, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/209786>

#### **Summary:**

Joseph Stalin and British Ambassador, Clark Kerr, discuss the future of the Polish government and Stalin's feeling about the Polish government in London.

#### **Original Language:**

English

#### **Contents:**

Original Scan  
Transcript - English

44 2-29

Stalin on Poland

Container 171

W. A. Harrison

LOC

MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM BRITISH AMBASSADOR

Jan 10 to 12 6:07

SIC

~~TOP SECRET~~

February 29, 1943.

I saw Stalin tonight, It was not a pleasant talk. He attempted to dismiss with a snigger the position of the Polish Government as described in the Prime Minister's message.

2/ He snorted from time to time as I made one by one the points contained in your telegram. For instance when I said that the Polish Government had assured us that they would not disavow our action he said: "Is that serious? How handsome of them!" When I got to point 2 of your paragraph 2 about the Curzon Line he broke in with: "But the Polish Government do not want to give us Lvov and Vilna. If they did, they should say so"? When I explained that they well understood that they would have to do so, he replied that this was not clear from the message. Indeed in a recent official statement they had made it manifest that their view did not tally with the Prime Minister's. I countered this by drawing on your telegram but without much success.

3/ At this stage Molotov confused the issue by evoking the bogey of Sosnkovski, which haunted us throughout the talk and which I tried in vain to shoo away. A long wrangle followed, during which Stalin said that he had little hope of settling the matter on the basis of the Prime Minister's message. I said that you and the Prime Minister would be much discouraged by this and he replied that he must tell the truth. The Polish Government did not want a settlement. Its purpose was to embroil us with the Soviet Government. When I said that if this were so the Polish Government would fail, he said that he feared that it might succeed. It had indeed made a rift between the Soviet Government and yourself and might do so later with the Prime Minister also. The Poles always had fresh demands. For instance they had had the effrontery to suggest something that ignored the sovereignty of the Soviet Government over territory which belonged to the Soviet Union, when they proposed that representatives of the United Nations should take a share in the administration of regions east of the demarcation line.

4/ When I scouted all this Stalin said that until the Prime Minister had returned from Africa Polish affairs had been in your hands. You had offered mediation which he had been obliged to reject. This had been a score for the Poles and you had been displeased. He had been obliged to hurt your feelings, Why? Because of the Poles.

5/ I did my best here to explain what was your position in this affair. To this he replied that the Russians and the British shed their blood while the Poles sat on your back or hid behind the Prime Minister's.

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February 29, 1944.

6/ When it became clear that Stalin was determined not to take the Prime Minister's message as the basis of a settlement, I asked him to make some constructive suggestions. He replied that this was simple. He only asked for two things: The Curzon Line and the reconstruction of the Polish Government. If the Poles meant business they should clearly and openly accept the Curzon Line, and he for his part would not tolerate any further demands from the Ukrainians or the White Russians. He dismissed the Polish contention that it was impossible for them to make such a declaration at present. If the government were to be reconstructed there could be no question of waiting until the recapture of Warsaw. But if a quick reshuffle were effected and genuinely democratic elements were brought into the administration this would help. (At this point the bogey of Sosnkowski stalked across the stage again). But there arose the question of who would enter a reconstructed government, and here, to my surprise, he took up the old Molotov proposal to do some recruiting in America and in this country. About America I used the now well worn arguments which he finally admitted had some force, but not until he had tried to persuade me that dual citizenship was possible - witness ex-President Moscicki who was both Polish and Swiss.

7/ He then suggested that, if citizenship were a bar, a couple of Polish Americans - for instance Professor Lange and Orlemanski (a Catholic priest) might come to Moscow to see what was going on here and advise on the choice of appropriate Poles. He did not know either of them, but he understood that they were "good men, non party men and not Communists." He said that he would like also to see some recruits from this country, but he could not name any at the moment. He would not admit that all this presented any serious difficulty and he assumed that the United States Government would put no obstacles in the way of its citizens coming to the Soviet Union. But it seemed to him that the Polish Government in London with its Sosnkowskis and its Kots and their agents in the United States and Canada was too firmly established to be shaken.

8/ This dreary and exasperating conversation lasted for well over an hour. No argument was of any avail.

9/ When he has consulted his government Stalin will be telegraphing his reply direct to the Prime Minister.

## MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM BRITISH AMBASSADOR

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