

March 1, 1944

Paraphrase of Embassy's telegram No. 688, March 1, 1944, to the Department of State

Citation:

"Paraphrase of Embassy's telegram No. 688, March 1, 1944, to the Department of State", March 1, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Container # 171, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/209772>

Summary:

W. Averell Harriman's telegram recounting Clark Kerr's summary of his conversation with Joseph Stalin discussing the future of the Polish government.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

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PARAPHRASE of Embassy's telegram No. 688, March 1, 1944, to the Department of State.

For the President and Acting Secretary. Personal and Secret.

This telegram is in supplement to Embassy's 673 of February 29.

I believe you will be interested in the following amplification of my report following my discussion with the British Ambassador who has shown me his despatch to his Government reporting his talk Monday night with Stalin over the Prime Minister's proposal for a Polish settlement.

The sarcastic manner in which Stalin continuously referred to the Polish Government and his reference to it as "Sosnkowski and his crowd" was emphasized to me by the British Ambassador. Stalin insisted that the Polish Government did not want a settlement and that their purpose was to embroil the British with the Soviet Government. The Ambassador stated that the Poles would never succeed in this, but Stalin replied that it was his fear that they might succeed. There had already been created a rift between the Soviet Government and Eden, and another might later develop also with Churchill. Stalin explained that while the Prime Minister was in Africa Eden had been handling the Polish affair, and Eden's offer of mediation had had to be rejected by Stalin. Thus the Poles had scored a point, and Eden's displeasure had been incurred. Why, Stalin asked, had he been obliged to hurt Eden's feelings? Because of the Poles. Why wasn't the Curzon Line accepted as a basis for settlement of the boundary question by the Poles if they were serious? The British Ambassador's explanations of the difficulties of the Polish Government in doing this were not admitted by Stalin. He said that the Poles had now had the effrontery to suggest that in the administration of Soviet territory east of the Curzon Line representatives of the United Nations should take a share. New demands would always be made by the Poles.

Every time Clark Kerr attempted to explain the British position Stalin replied that while the Poles were "hiding behind the Prime Minister's broad back", the Russians and the British were shedding their blood.

The British Ambassador asked Stalin to make some constructive suggestion, after it became clear that Stalin was determined not to take the Prime Minister's message as a basis for settlement. In reply Stalin said that this

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was simple, that he asked for only two things: a reconstructed Polish Government, and the Curzon Line. The Poles should clearly accept the Curzon Line if they meant business. For his part, Stalin said, he would not tolerate any further demands put forward by the White Russians or the Ukrainians. There was no need of waiting until the recapture of Warsaw to effect a reconstruction of the Government. |||

In reply to the Ambassador's question as to what kind of reconstruction he expected, Stalin explained the idea (as reported in my previous telegram) of bringing in Poles from America and Russia. Although no names in Russia were mentioned, he suggested that some Polish-Americans such as Professor Lang and Orlemanski (a Catholic priest) might come to Moscow and advise on the choice of appropriate Poles, if they themselves did not wish to take up Polish nationality again. Stalin assumed the United States Government would not put any obstacles in the way of its citizens coming to the Soviet Union for the purpose proposed, and he would not admit that any of these suggestions presented serious difficulties. The Polish Government in London, it seemed to him on the other hand, was too firmly established with its Sosnkowskis and Kots and their agents in the United States and Canada to be shaken up.

Stalin concluded with the statement that he would consult his associates and telegraph his reply to the Prime Minister.

I called Molotov's office yesterday regarding my appointment with Stalin but so far no reply has been forthcoming.

Stalin was undoubtedly ready to see me on Sunday, but this was before he received your message and the Prime Minister's proposal. It may now well be that he will evade seeing me because he does not wish at this time to involve you through me in an argument over the Prime Minister's proposal. However, it may be his wish to formulate before seeing me a definite position and reply that is delaying our meeting.

It has been made clear again that Stalin considers that the Polish Government in London do not represent the Polish people, that they are intriguers against the Soviet Union and the unity of the United Nations, and that to have traffic with them is dangerous for all concerned.

Stalin considers, I believe, that at Moscow and Tehran he and Molotov made their position clear. I believe he does not regard this position as unilateral

action on his part but rather that it is based on facts which Great Britain and the United States should recognize as in line with our broad international objectives of peace and democracy. It is his hope, I believe, that we will eventually agree that he is right and then he would welcome our participation in developing some sort of a Committee of Liberation which would be supported by all three countries working together.

Unless you wish me to do otherwise, I shall await being called by Stalin without making a further request for an appointment.

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