The American Policy Towards Poland 1943—1946

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The purpose of this article is not to deal with the American policy towards Poland in all its aspects. In consideration of the enormous material about Poland, the key country in the American policy towards Eastern Europe, that would be a stupendous task. The primary aspect here is the conflict between Soviet and American goals. Main themes will be questions such as these: What role did American policy makers want the United States and the Soviet Union to play in Polish affairs? What Polish governments were acceptable to the United States and what were the criteria for acceptability?

The relationship between the Roosevelt Administration and the Polish Sikorski Government-in-exile was generally quite good. In the period from 1941 to Sikorski's death in the middle of 1943 the Polish Prime Minister was received in Washington three times. More important signs of support were the granting of Lend-Lease and other forms of economic aid to the Sikorski Government. The Polish Premier also received some encouragement in Washington for his plans for an East European federation, plans which very easily could be regarded as anti-Soviet measures.

The most important question for the Poles was the dispute with the Soviet Union over the border line between the two countries. The American policy on such territorial issues was to have them postponed until after the war. Such a course had many sources. What is most important in this connection is that such a policy had to lead to a sharper conflict with the Soviet Union than with Poland. This was so because the Russians pressed hard to have a final decision in

favor of the 1939 border line as soon as possible. And, as Hull has stated, one element behind the Americans wanting all territorial questions postponed until after the war was opposition to the Soviet Government's "tremendous ambition with regard to Europe". This indirect support for the Polish side also showed in the successful American attempt to have all references to territorial questions removed from the Anglo-Soviet treaty of 1942. But none of these actions meant that the United States had taken any definite side as regards the Polish-Soviet differences. And the American policy makers did not yet have to come down on anyone of the two sides, since Soviet-Polish relations were still relatively friendly.

As the Soviet Union came to play a very central part in the war against Germany, the position of the United States shifted from one of indirect support to the Poles to one of attempted neutrality. In late 1942 and early 1943 Polish observers became more and more worried about this tendency even if it did not yet openly show in any of the most important questions. But the Roosevelt-Eden conversations in March 1943 clearly indicated the direction of American policy on the confidential level. Although it is not quite clear whether Roosevelt in those talks agreed with Eden on the Curzon Line as the most preferable Polish-Soviet border, the drift of his thinking was that Poland should not be allowed to destroy Great Power harmony in the post-war world. If that meant that something like the Curzon Line would have to be accepted, FDR seemed willing to do it.

On April 25, 1943, the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with the Sikorski Government. What finally led to this rupture was the Polish request for an international investigation of the circumstances around the many dead Polish officers found in Katyn Forest. The American reaction to the break off in relations was two-edged. Roosevelt made it clear that the US would continue to maintain relations with the Sikorski Government, and he refuted Soviet accusations about Sikorski having collaborated with the Germans. But FDR refused, more than Churchill, to make an issue out of the rupture and emphasized his disagreement with the way the Poles had handled the affair. The United States also declined a Polish request, supported by the British, that the US handle Polish interests in the Soviet Union after relations had been broken off.

As the Polish issue became increasingly controversial the Americans tried to escape taking sides by pursuing a policy of disinterest. The State Department pointed out that it was natural for Britain to take the lead in resolving the Polish-Soviet dispute. The resulting policy of often refusing to take sides could in some cases have consequences different from the intencled. When Hull for instance did not want to apply any pressure on the Polish Government to change its composition by eliminating the most anti-Soviet members, this could of course not be interpreted as a policy giving equal emphasis to both sides. Neither could the State Department's attempt to solve the question of citizenship for those living in the disputed Soviet-Polish borderland, without going into the merits of the territorial problem, be considered as anything else than indirect support to the Poles. This was pointed out both by Ambassador Stanley in Moscow and even by Hull himself, when he said that the basis for the American stand was "an action taken by the Soviet Government which has the effect of unilaterally forcing hundreds of thousands of citizens of another United Nations . . . to become Soviet citizens regardless of what the desire of the persons affected might be." But on the other hand the military aid the United States had sent to Poland during most of 1913 was called off in the wake of the October Conference in Moscow.

While Hull and the State Department tried to follow a nonpartisan policy in the Polish-Soviet dispute but still showed some bias in favor of the Poles, FDR himself pursued a course where harmony among the Great Powers was the most predominant feature. But it was not by any means the only feature. Some recognition had to be shown towards the Poles, especially when their claims had strong support from the large bloc of Polish-American voters. Such pressure from different directions was often resolved by FDR by following an ambiguous policy. In the case of Poland this led to one side of the coin being shown to the Poles and their supporters in the United States and another side being used in high-level diplomacy behind the scene.

This second side was exemplified by the talks with Eden in March 1943 and again in May of the same year when President Benes of Czechoslovakia visited Washington. And after having given Hull some indication of his thinking on Poland's eastern border, Roosevelt

at Teheran was for the first time personally confronted with the insistent Soviet demands in this question. After Rooseveit had pointed out that he could not enter into any binding commitments partially because "there were in the United States from six to seven million of Polish extraction, and as a practical man he did not wish to lose their vote", FDR gave Stalin the impression that he would in the end probably agree to the Soviet demands. This was done by Roosevelt without afterwards giving any information about it to his own State Department, a factor which was to give even less ccherence to an already tangled American policy in the Polish question.

After Teheran Roosevelt again left the initiative in the Polish border question with Churchill. When Churchill wanted,to postpone the planned visit to Washington by the new Polish Premier, Mikolajczyk, in order to pressure the Poles to accept the Curzon Line, Roosevelt complied with this. This was of course indirect support for the British point of view. But the only thing that might have sufficed to persuade the obstinate Poles would have been open American association with Churchill's effort. That was out of the question for FDR, especially in an election year. When Mikolajczyk asked Roosevelt directly about his attitude on the border problem, the American President did modify his previous stand of having all territorial questions postponed until after the war. But when it came to applying direct pressure on the Poles FDR only said that "This Government recognizes that recent developments present certain complex and vital considerations which may render it desirable for the Polish Government to endeavor to reach a solution with regard to its territory without delay."

The same American hesitancy due to conflicting pressure also showed up in the question of the composition of the Polish Government. While wanting to continue recognition of the Mikolajczyk Government, Roosevelt indicated both to Stalin and to Churchill that he would favor an elimination of the most anti-Soviet members from that Government. But at the same time FDR wanted the Poles to do this reorganization without outside pressure.

In June 1944 Roosevelt finally received Mikolajczyk in Washington. After having extracted a promise from him that he would not disturb the electoral campaign in the US, Roosevelt was more blunt to the Premier than he had ever been before. FDR openly stated the

importance of making some changes in the set-up of the London Government. On the border question he told Mikolajczyk that essential concessions would have to be made even if Lwow and a surrrounding area ought to be retained by the Poles. But the President took much of the bite out of these recommendations by clearly dissociating himseif from the Curzon Line advocated by Stalin and Churchill and by the rather extravagant praise he lavished on the Premier. The resumption of American arms deliveries to Poland and the open encouragement Mikolajczyk received from Hull and Stettinius in the State Department weakened the new features of FDR's policy even further.

The dualism in Roosevelt's policy was again illustrated by the lukewarm support he gave to Mikolajczyk's visit to the Soviet Union. Only after Churchill had intervened more forcefully was the Polish Premier received in Moscow. The point about Lwow, which had somewhat encouraged Mikolajczyk, was considerably watered down when presented by Harriman to Stalin.

The Polish visit to Stalin was completely overshadowed by the insurrection in Warsaw. The Soviet refusal to aid the uprising or even to give permission for American planes to use the shuttle-bombing bases in the Soviet Union to drop supplies to the Warsaw insurgents, had to lead to a straining of Soviet-American relations, especially when the Russians in the course of one week refused two American and one joint Roosevelt—Churchill request for support to Warsaw. But FDR did not want to follow Churchill's proposal that the Americans just make use of the Russian bases without any permission having been granted.

What is equally important in this connection is that FDR even during the Warsaw insurrection kept up his vague pressure on Mikolajczyk to reach some sort of settlement with Stalin on the territorial and governmental issues. For the first time Roosevelt even tried to induce the Premier to reach an agreement as well with the Soviet-sponsored Polish Committee of National Liberation, a step which to Mikolajczyk, with considerable exaggeration, meant the President's "acceptance of the Lublin Poles as the bona fide leaders of the nation." The Warsaw uprising thus led to no important change in the two-pronged American policy towards Poland of on the one hand keeping a low American profile and on the other applying some

pressure for a settlement on both parties, but gradually most on the Poles. This latter part was more pronounced with Roosevelt than with Hull and his State Department.

Even if Great Power harmony counted more with Roosevelt than the case of the Mikolajczyli Government, FDR's campaign for a fourth presidential term increased the leverage of the Poles. In an effort to line up the important Polish-American vote Roosevelt had to give considerable, general lip service to the Polish side. But that Great Power harmony was what counted most with the President was illustrated by his policy in connection with Churchill's October visit to Moscow, a visit which coincided with the height of the election campaign. While publicly proclaiming his general support for the Poles, Roosevelt gave Churchill an almost: free hand in his talks with Stalin. On the question of Poland's eastern border, that meant virtual acceptance of the Curzon Line, After the British Prime Minister had cabled FDR about British-Soviet agreement on the Curzon Line and about the probability of the Lublin Committee receiving at least half the posts in a newly planned and reorganized Polish government, Roosevelt said in reply only that he was delighted over the progress made and that "When and if a solution is arrived at I should like to be consulted as to the advisability from this point of view of delaying its publication for about two weeks. You will understand." The President made no reservation as to the contents of what he might be willing to accept. We only wanted to make sure his re-election would not be disturbed.

But during the Moscow meeting the discrepancy between what Roosevelt had said to Mikolajczyk and what he had said to Stalin became clear to the Poles. This occured when the Russians used FDR's Teheran stand, or their interpretation of it, to force an agreement from Mikolajczyk on the Curzon Line. The revelation came as a shock to the Polish Premier who sent FDR a letter in order to have the conflicting American positions clarified. Roosevelt took no action on the letter until after his re-election. On November 17 he finally told Mikolajczpk: "In regard to the future frontiers of Poland, if mutual agreement on this subject, including the proposed compensation for Poland from Germany is reached between the Polish, Soviet, and British Governments, this Government would offer no objection." But since it had not proved possible for FDR to have the problem

solved by others so he could avoid taking sides, Harriinan was instructed to make a last appeal to Stalin for the retention of the Lwow area with the Poles. After the fall of the Mikolajczyk Government the plan about a last appeal to Stalin was temporarily given up.

While Roosevelt considered the question of Poland's borders to be of relatively little importance, the resignation of Mikolajczyk was a hard blow for American interests in the more important problem as to what government Poland was to have. The United States continued its recognition of the London Poles, but the support given to the new Arciszewski Government was only marginal. The Americans clearly did not want to jeopardize their standing with a future government in Warsaw by giving more than token support to what: was evidently considered an unrepresentative and short-lived London exile group. The British took the same attitude.

While Roosevelt had tried to play the Polish border question in such a way as not to provoke any major dispute with Stalin, this tactic was more difficult in the key governmental problem. The American policy centered around Mikolajczyk and his Peasant Party. The Russians obviously gave increasing preference to the Lublin group. And in late 1944, when the Soviets and their Polish supporters controlled most of Poland, this dispute flared up. On December 16 Roosevelt sent Stalin a message in which he tried to prevent Soviet recognition of the Lublin Poles before the planned Yalta meeting. This was unsuccessful, and on January 5, 1945, the Soviet Union entered into formal diplomatic relations with the Lublin Government.

FDR had already emphasized that there would be no American recognition of the Lublin Committe and that "this is in no sense due to any special ties or feelings for the London (Polish) Government." At the same time the President had pointed out that Mikolajczyk "is the only Polish leader in sight who seems to offer the possibility of a genuine solution of the difficult and dangerous Polish question." Now Roosevelt also publicly voiced his concern about the Polish situation,

American opposition to the Lublin Committee was based on a belief that it represented a clear minority of the Polish population. Furthermore, Americans had an impression that it was controlled by Moscow. There was even in early January some reaction against the agrarian reform the Lublin Committee had carried out in areas

it controlled. And as the State Department prepared for the Yalta Conference it placed highest priority on a policy of equal opportunity for all foreign interests to carry on business activities in Poland. It could hardly be expected that such goals would be advanced by the Lublin Committee.

Instead, American co-operation with Mikolajczyk became increasingly manifest. At the end of January the ex-Premier was told that Roosevelt wanted him as Prime Minister of the future government of Poland. And the American lists of Poles acceptable for inclusion in a new Polish Government were put forth only after close coordination with the Peasant Party leader. The State Department emphasized before Yalta that "we should use our full influence to see that the Polish Peasant Party, the largest in the country, and its leader, Mikolajczyk, are given an opportunity to take a leading role in any interim arrangements which may be made pending full liberation and free elections."

But at Yalta several factors had to be taken into account which tended to modify the American aversion towards the Lublin Committee. Roosevelt still placed Great Power co-operation as his supreme goal. Only then could his a!!-important plans for a world organization work. Additional points of strength for the Soviet Union in the Polish question were the American desire for Soviet participation in the war against Japan and the fact that the Soviet Union already controlled Poland. The latter element mas illustrated by FDR's comment in answer to pressure exerted on him for a more ambitious American policy towards Poland: " Do you want me to go to war with Russia?" Roosevelt thought that the Soviet Union was the preponderant power in Eastern Europe and that little could be done to challenge Soviet policies effectively. And if FDR wanted no major confrontation with the Soviet Union almost any agreement on Poland would be better than a prolongation of the status quo under the Lublin Committee.

All these elements contribute to an understanding of the modifications the American position underwent during the Yalta Conference. The plan for a Polish Presidential Committee was rather quickly dropped, and on the third day of negotiating the American side presented the compromise proposal which was to become the basis of the final agreement. While the British wanted to lessen the role

the Americans had assigned to Lublin, Roosevelt worked hard on papering over the points of disagreement, considering them mostly as "a matter of drafting"

Both the Soviet Union and the Government of London Poles considered the Yalta agreement a victory for Lublin, What Roosevelt and the State Department thought is not quite as clear. Roosevelt, and Truman as well, saw that no clear-cut agreement had been concluded. It was obvious that it *could* be stretched and it must also have been thought probable that it *would* be stretched by the Soviet Union dealing, as it would, from a position of strength. And from the key sentence of the Yalta Protocol which states that "The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should ... be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad", it is difficult to escape the conclusion that this was a victory for Lublin and that it was probably even seen as such by Washington. In late March Roosevelt told Churchill that "as clearly shown in the agreement, somewhat more emphasis (is placed—G.L.) on the Lublin Poles than on the other two groups from which the new Government is to be drawn."

It is not likely that this meant a writing off of Poland to the Soviet Union. Here it was hoped that the clause on elections in Poland would be one guarantee against such an eventuality. The United States and Britain succeeded in having inserted in the agreement a point on free and unfettered elections "as soon as possible". But decisive in this connection were the arrangements for supervision of the elections. While the United States in the first Yalta meetings gut great stress on the responsibility for electoral supervision being placed directly with the Ambassadors of the three Great Powers, the American delegation later on had to water down this clause considerably. Again the British objected in vain to the American concessions. The final Protocol only said that the Great Powers and Poland "will exchange Ambassadors by whose reports the respective Governments will be kept informed about the situation in Poland."

On the basis of what had transpired regarding Poland's eastern border since the Teheran Conference, the Soviet Union played a very strong hand in insisting on the Curzon Line. FDR only made a rather weak appeal for Lwow to go to Poland, and since Churchill had

repeatedly bound himself to the Curzon Line any departure from it depended on Stalin's magnanimity. That meant that there was only marginal digressions from the Line. Poland was to receive substantial compensation in the West, but nothing definite was decided on this.

The scene now shifted from the heads of government at Yalta to the Commission in Moscow charged to consult with Polish leaders about "the reorganisation of the present Government". Contrary to what was formerly thought, the views of the United States and Great Britain must now be said on quite a few occasions to have diverged in this Commission. For almost a month there was Anglo-American disagreement over questions such as the British proposal to send a high level mission to Poland to prepare elections, over the American idea of a political truce inside Poland, over the arbitral position of the Commission, and finally over the British request that any Pole was to be invited by the Commission unless all of its three members objected.

Important as these points were they can easily be exaggerated. And it is not correct, as maintained by some, that the American side wanted to start consultations with the Lublin Poles without first having obtained agreement on what other Poles were to be invited. On this point both the State Department and the Foreign Office reversed the stand initially taken by their Ambassadors in Moscow. Even more important was the Anglo-American agreement that the Lublin Poles were to have no veto on the names of other Poles invited.

What is most in focus for this article is what kind of idea the Americans had for the coinposition of the new government. This is difficult to answer as regards the first month and a half of the Commission's work, since it never came even close to discussing that question. The composition of the group to be called in for consultations about the future government gives the best indication for an answer, despite the American contention that those called in for consultation would not necessarily be included in the government. The first British-American proposal would have given non-Lublin Poles a clear majority in the consultations. As this position came under strong Soviet pressure, Harriman and the State Department seemed to be willing to settle for an even split between Lublin and non-Lublin Poles. But American-British support for Mikolajczyk as the key Polish politician continued unabated during the drawn-out

negotiations. Not only was he included on all the American lists of names submitted for inclusion in the consultations, but these same lists had been worked out in close understanding with Mikolajczyk himself. Even if the State Department disliked the conditions the Peasant Party leader set for participation in the Moscow consultations, it was not willing to have him excluded if he did not give up his demands. And the question of veto for Lublin over which other Poles were to be invited to Moscow—the most important single point holding up the consultations—was really a question of the place Mikolajczyk was to occupy in the preliminaries and later on in the government itself.

On March 19 the disputed points between the United States and Britain were finally cleared up, but the more basic questions between these two powers on the one side and the Soviet Union on the other still remained unsolved. In an effort to break the deadlock Roosevelt sent Stalin at the end of March a message about Poland which had been worked out in cooperation with Churchill and was supported by him. In that message the responsibility for the impasse was put squarely on the Soviet Union, and in his interpretation of the Yalta agreement Roosevelt said: "While it is true that the Lublin Government is to be reorganized and its members play a prorninent role, it is to be done in such a fashion as to bring into being a new government . . . I must make it quite clear to you that any such solution which would result in a thinly disguised continuance of the present Warsaw regime would be unacceptable and would cause the people of the United States to regard the Yalta agreements as having failed." In his answer Staiin said that the United States did not give the Lublin Poles their rightful position after what had been agreed upon at Yalta, and instead he proposed that the Yugoslavian model be transferred to Poland. This was generally interpreted to mean that the non-Lublin Poles would be given only one of five Cabinet posts.

The last weeks of Franklin Roosevelt's life represented a toughening of the American attitude towards Poland and was best illustrated by the previously mentioned telegram and by the President's last cables to Churchill. Several of FDR's foreign policy collaborators have also told about this change in his policy. Although Polish developments—a dislike to follow up the Yalta decisions in the face of growing Soviet control in Eastern Europe—played a prominent

part in this tougher American attitude towards the Soviet Union it was by no means the only factor. The acrimonious Soviet-American exchange over alledged German peace feelers in Italy and what was felt to be Soviet down-grading of the United Nations by not sending Molotov to the San Francisco Conference were also very important in this connection.

This tougher American policy was continued by Truman in his message to Stalin only a few days alter his inauguration. Truman first proposed what would amount to Lublin and non-Lublin Poles both having four representatives in the Moscow consultations. However, under pressure from the British, this arrangement was changed to a five to three composition in favor of the non-Lublin side. Stalin of course interpreted this to be in conflict with the previously agreed upon principle that the Lublin Poles were to play a prominent part in these consultations. Even inside the State Department some thought that the proposed five to three situation in the consultations might very well be in conflict with the Crimea decisions.

The dispute over the future government of Poland was further intensified by the conclusion of an agreement on mutual assistance between the Soviet Union and the Lublin Government, by the Soviet attempt to have Lublin represent Poland at San Francisco, and also by the Russians allowing "their" Poles take control of the territory all the way to the Oder-Neisse line.

The result of all this was that the concessions the United States had made on Poland at Yalta were pushed in the background. This could easily be done since the agreements clearly left room for different interpretations. In the preparations for Molotov's visit to the United States only Stimson and Marshall, of Truman's key foreign policy advisers, counselled caution in the Polish question. Truman himself in a rather rude manner told Molotov to stick to the Crimea decisions on Poland and also made it clear to the Soviet Foreign Minister that economic aid to the Soviet Union would be tied to co-operation shown in political questions. This insistence of Truman on the Russians adhering to concluded agreements was somewhat inconsistent with the President's pronouncement that these same agreements with the Soviet Union "had so far been a one-way street and that this could not continue." What now was uppermost in

Truman's mind was a desire to stand up to the Russians in an emphatic way.

At the end of April the climate in the Polish dispute improved somewhat when Stalin agreed to Mikolajczyk's taking part in the consultations, after the Peasant leader had published satisfactory declarations of his support for the Crimea decisions. On the first day of May Stettinius and Harriman formulated what they considered the absolute minimum the Americans could accept. This limit was one-third representation in the government for the non-Lublin Poles. And Mikolajczyk would have to be included in this third which was to be controlled by him.

The presentation of this minimum plan was postponed by Molotov's statement on May 3 that 16 prominent Poles who had been declared missing had actually been imprisoned by the Russians. This led to a British-American reaction which included postponement of further talks on Poland, a postponement the British hoped would last until the Potsdam meeting. But the Americans did not want the suspension of talks to last that long, and Eden even feared that the State Department might agree to the Yugoslav precedent which Stalin had repeatedly insisted on.

At the end of May Truman lifted the suspension of the Polish talks by sending Hopkins to Moscow. While there, he and Stalin agreed on the list of Poles to be invited for consultation. Of the twelve names they selected five must be considered to have definitely favored Lublin, four could be counted in Mikolajczyk's camp, while the last three were found somewhere in between. In the subsequent consultations two of the last three came to support Lublin. On the question of release or amnesty for the 16 imprisoned Poles nothing definite was reached, and concerning elections and political freedom in Poland the result was even more vague.

While the composition of the actual government was to be left to the Poles themselves, the main outline could be foreseen after agreement on the consultation list. Hopkins also stated that "he knew that President Roosevelt and President Truman had always anticipated that the members of the present Warsaw regime would constitute a majority of the new Polish Provisional Government." A satisfactory settlement of the voting rules for the United Nations

Organization did of course make such an admittance easier to make for Hopkins.

The Hopkins talks were very probably not part of any intricate American plan for a "delayed showdown" with the Soviet Union. Although the American attitude towards Poland gradually toughened after the end of March, the new policy did not exclude an American-Soviet compromise. The results Hopkins obtained in Moscow were clearly within the limits of what had earlier been defined as the American minimum. And with some resignation even Churchill agreed that Hopkins "has obtained the best solution we could hope for in the circumstances."

Having agreed upon the list of appropriate names, the Americans discovered that their leverage during the consultations was relatively limited. The Poles reached agreement on Lublin controlling two-thirds of the new government, and although this was somewhat worse than the Americans had probably hoped for, the United States was now bent on disposing of the festering Polish problem. This could be done more easily since, in addition to the American minimum of one-third representation lor Mikolajczyk and his supporters, the Moscow negotiations had also resulted in a reaffirmation of the Potsdam clause on free elections. On July 5 the United States, supported somewhat reluctantly by Britain, extended recognition to the new Polish Government after the Poles had "recognized in their entirety the decisions of the Crimea Conference on eke Polish question."

Even if the State Department had warned even before the Yalta Conference that an interim government dominated by Lublin might prevent establishment of a democratic regime, this American recognition of a Lublin-dominated Government did not mean that American policymakers had given up hopes for developments in Poland taking a course acceptable to them. As Harriman cabled from Moscow in late June: "It is impossible to predict the trend of events in Poland but I believe the stage is set as well as can be done at the present time and that if we continue to take a sympathetic interest in Polish affairs and are reasonably generous in our economic relations there is a fair chance that things will work out satisfactorily from our standpoint." To follow up this advice Harriman urged that the American Ambassador be sent to Poland as soon as possible after

the formation of the new government, and he also encouraged the Poles to seek economic assistance from the United States.

In preparing for the Potsdam Conference the State Department generally accepted Harriman's advice that the United States try to use its economic leverage to further its interests. The Department commented: "Immediate action on our part to facilitate by credits and otherwise the supplying to Poland of urgently needed equipment and relief materials will promote in a far-reaching and enduring manner a healthy American influence in Poland, especially in regard to the holding of free elections." Harriman occasionally showed even more optimism about what could be done through American financial credits. It was quite clear that American political and economic goals could best be advanced "through support of Mikolajczyk and his fellow democratic ministers in the new government ..." These economic favors were not to be given free of charge. In addition to free elections the State Department emphasized equal opportunity for all nations in Polish trade and investment.

Since the question of a new government had already been solved before the Potsdam meeting it was only superficially discussed during that meeting. Aside from the question of Poland's western border the most important problem for the United States at Potsdam was to extract new and better guarantees for free elections. As at Yalta the US wanted to put most of the responsibility for the elections on the Great Powers, but Stalin succeeded in making elections almost exclusively dependent on the Polish authorities. Again the Western powers had to measure such limited gains against a prolongation of the status quo.

This is not the place for any discussion of the problem of Poland's western border, since that was intimately connected with the policies of the Allied Powers towards Germany. But one motive for the American opposition to the Oder-Western Neisse and even to the Eastern Neisse was that such borderlines would lead to a high degree of Polish dependence upon the Soviet Union. However, since the United States gave priority to an agreement on reparations from Germany which would give the Soviet Union a minimum of influence in the Western zones, Byrnes in his so called "package deal" had in return to give the Poles the administration of all territory up to the Western Neisse. Mikolajczyk also supported the easternmost line,

and American non-recognition of the Western Neisse would undoubtedly have weakened Loth his and American position in Poland. The Protocol said that the final delimitation of the frontier should await the peace settlement. But this reservation was not really brought forth again on the American side until concern for the fate of Germany became of exclusive importance, as evidenced by Byrnes' Stuttgart speech of September 1946. The Potsdam decision really represented a de facto territorial settlement.

To support both Mikolajczyk and American interests in Poland the State Department, together with the American Ambassador to Poland, Bliss Lane, drew up a comprehensive program of economic aid for the Poles. Poland was to receive extensive relief supplies from UNRRA and to be offered surplus war material, and credits from the Export-Import Bank were to be made available "provided the Polish Government would provide us with the necessary information about its financial situation."

But even before any of this aid, with the exception of UNRRA supplies, had been extended to Poland, the United States had met with so many points of irritation on both the political and economic front that its willingness to give aid to Poland was significantly reduced. And Bliss Lane's determination "to take advantage of the eagerness of the Polish Government for economic assistance and to use it as a lever by which we could obtain fulfillment of Polish commitments under the Yalta and Potsdam decisions, . . ." met with difficulties when the Poles did not show quite the eagerness for aid which Bliss Lane had hoped for.

The first American complaints involved Polish state control over exports and imports as well as the introduction of a system of multiple rates of exchange which was highly unfavorable to the dollar. In the economic sphere of things the Americans raised a host of complaints over Polish barter agreements with the Soviet Union, over the procedure the Poles followed in nationalizing property where American interests were involved, over the lack of highly favorable treatment accorded American nationals and corporations in Poland, and over the failure of the Poles in furnishing the United States with the terms of their commercial agreements with other countries. In the political field the United States complained about the lack of freedom both for the Polish and the foreign press, and

about the activities of the Polish Security Police. Finally there were increasing American doubts as to the possibility of holding free elections in Poland.

Even if the State Department had both political and economic points of complaint towards the Poles, the economic side seemed to be most important for the hesitant American attitude on Polish credits in late 1945. In November Byrnes instructed Lane that "Dept. at present inclined to view that in general, economic rather than political questions should be tied to Exim-bank credit negotiations . . ." This economic primacy stemmed from several factors. Economic interests were in themselves important in the conduct of American foreign policy. There was also considerable doubt about the leverage the United States could exert in political as opposed to economic matters. One additional consideration was probably that the econoinic grievances were more explicit than the political ones. As a result, they were more open and sensitive to eventual objections from the United States. There was even for some time relative satisfaction with political developments in Poland. While in London, Byrnes in September recommended the Polish procedure of setting up a new government for use as well in Rumania. And despite periods of pessimism Mikolajczyk believed that developments in Poland would take a different turn from that in the most heavily Soviet-controlled areas. Furthermore, the United States issued only an oral protest against one of the more manifest abuses of the Polish Government, the banning of the minor political parties. This mild reaction was partially due to the fact that the parties were small and that their internal composition reflected their various activities and stances during the course of the war. It was also due to Mikolajczyk's estimation that the ban on small parties would strengthen his Peasant Party. But at the end of January 1946 Byrnes followed up a statement from Bevin openly condemning political murders in Poland, though only after considerable pressure from Senator Vandenberg.

Poland was unconditionally given large supplies of aid from the American-dominated UNRRA organization so that in the end Poland, next only to China, was the country to receive the greatest amount. But after months of indecision the State Department finally made up its mind in January — February of 1946 as to exactly what concessions it wanted to extract from the Poles in return for financial

support. The six points presented to Warsaw included Polish support for the principles of free trade and the US Proposals for Expansion of World Trade and Employment, extension of most favored treatment to the United States, adequate and effective compensation for nationalizations of American property, and Ainerican access to full information on the international economic relations of Poland. The sixth and the only political condition was an explicit Polish reaffirmation of the Potsdam election commitment. If the Department received full satisfaction on these six points, the Poles were to be granted a 50 million dollar Export-Import Bank credit. To receive more the Poles would have to comply with additional points, but even if they did not adhere to the six points they might still receive a credit of 25 million dollars. Bliss Lane indicated his oppositon to this plan. He wanted a tougher American policy. A credit to buy American surplus property was only indirectly tied to these concessions, since the United States had considerable interests in disposing of its surplus property.

Lane's opposition to credits was intimately connected with his evaluation of the political situation in Poland. In March 1946 he had come to feel that very little could be done to prevent Poland from slipping completely under the control of the Soviet Union. The best thing to do, in Lane's opinion, would bc to start educating the American public on the Soviet danger, so as to make it possible to conduct a more forceful American foreign policy. Great Britain also pressed for a harder American policy towards Poland. The United States, however, showed little willingness to protest some minor steps the Polish Government took to consolidate its control, since such protests would probably only be brushed off as interference in the internal affairs of Poland. However, in April 1946 there was little doubt that the State Department took a bleak view of the possibility for free elections ever being held in Poland.

On April 24 the United States and Poland exchanged notes granting Poland a 40 million dollar credit from the Export-Import Bank in addition to 50 millions to buy US surplus property. In return the Poles had agreed to all of the five economic conditions the State Department had stipulated in January— February. On the question of free elections the United States had to settle for a unilateral Polish reaffirmation of the Potsdam article which stated

that "the general elections will take place this year". Despite such Polish concessions both Great Britain and Ambassador Lane definitely opposed the extension of these credits. Lane interpreted the credits as an expression of non-confidence in his evaluation of Polish events, and the British described the Polish concessions as mere paper commitments which the Polish Government most likely would not live up to.

The State Department also had doubts about the Poles complying with the agreements, especielly the statement on free elections. But Byrnes evidently had some hope that at least the economic clauses could be fulfilled, since the Poles had indicated interest in further credits. These would then depend upon completion of the concessions made. One more reason for the extension of credits was that the Export-Import Bank loan was to be used in the coal industry. This might then give Western Europe some of the coal it vitally needed and could draw Poland away from a one-sided orientation towards the Soviet Union.

The objections to the 90 million dollar grant to Poland had evidently strengthened already existing doubts within the Department. But only two weeks after the exchange of notes Lane was able to persuade Byrnes to withhold all but the four million dollars of the surplus credit already given to the Poles. The final American signature on the Export-Import Bank loan was also withheld. The official reason for this suspension of further aid to Poland was that the Poles had not kept their promise of publishing the notes of exhange of April 24. Furthermore, the Poles had not supplied information on their economic treaties with the Soviet Union. Both Byrnes and Acheson, however, clearly hoped that this suspension would lead to political improvements "in view of the rapidly deteriorating political conditions in Poland." It was now felt that free elections had become even more of an impossibility. And the British kept pressing for a tougher American policy.

However, since the Poles had already been promised credits in return for certain specified economic concessions, it was difficult now to increase conditions which had already been agreed upon. Therefore, at the end of May the State Department said that suspension of surplus property deliveries would be lifted upon assurance that the United States would be furnished with the Polish economic

treaties. When these treaties had been received the Export-Jinport loan would be signed. At the time of this statement the notes of exchange of April 24 had already been published in the Polish press.

On June 26, only four days before the important referendum in Poland, the State Department approved the restoration of the surplus credit. And on August 9 it was announced that final arrangements were made for the Export-Import Bank credit.

By that time the very limited leverage afforded by America's strong economic position had been clearly illustrated in the referendum on constitutional and economic reforms and on the Oder-Neisse border. Lane reported extensive falsification of the returns, and on August 19 the United States formally protested to Poland against a referendum which was felt to be a trial run for the methods to be used in the long-postponed election.

This negative evaluation of events in Poland coincided with an American reappraisal of Eastern Europe in general. Primarily as a result of the voting pattern at the Peace Conference, Byrnes had come to feel that the whole area was dominated by the Soviet Union. In late September the Secretary of State summed up the situation in this way: "... the time has now come, I am convinced, in the light of the attitude of the Soviet Government and the neighboring states which it dominates in varying degrees, when the implementation of our general policies requires the closest coordination. In a word we must help our friends in every way and refrain from assisting those who either through helplessness or for other reasons are opposing the principles for which we stand."

By now Poland was clearly on the wrong side in the Cold War, while on the other hand Germany was steadily increasing in importance. One result of this was reawakened interest in the question of Poland's western border, as finally determined by the Peace Conference. Byrnes' Stuttgart speech was an effort to strengthen the position of the United States in Germany at the expense of the ambiguous Oder-Neisse policy of the Soviet Union. The Russians now fully had to support the Poles. The new American Oder-Neisse policy was extremely unpopular in every quarter in Poland, but Germany was more essential to American interests than Poland. Equally important was the fact that the United States had a strong

position to protect in Germany, while it had lost almost everything in Poland.

In early October Lane cabled from Warsaw the terms he wanted the Poles to fulfill in return for new credits. These terms were so stiff that he did not actually think that much could be obtained. The dominating power in Poland was the Soviet Union, and changes would primarily have to be effected from Moscow. And obviously the United States did not really expect the Russians to change their established course. Both the US and Britain now abandoned as well their policy of wanting supervision of the Polish elections. These would in all probability be rigged, and ineffective supervision would only lead to Western responsibility for the falsified results. In late November the Americans sent the Poles a note in view of "the disturbing reports ... received concerning the preparations for the elections ..."

But despite this course of development in Poland the State Department did not want Mikolajczyk to boycott the election or to play up pre-elecdon abuses in such a way that they could lead to an outright ban on his participation. Mikolajczyk's withdrawal would probably only be used to strengthen the Communists' claim that the Peasant Party lacked popular support, while his defeat in a rigged election left the possibility open for protests on various levels. In its most optimistic moments the State Department even seems to have wondered whether Mikolajczyk could not make a relatively strong showing in spite of electoral irregularities. But the last reports the American Embassy in Poland sent to Washington in 1946 did not leave much hope ot this. In fact, on the very last day of the year Lane cabled that "In view of arrests, intimidations et cetera it is now possible Government bloc may triumph even should voting and counting procedure be correct."

This American dissatisfaction with political developments did not, as one would have expected, lead to an end to all Polish-American contacts on financial assistance. Even after Byrnes' abrupt halt in September of aid to Czechoslovakia—a country which was far more independent— the State Department entered into financial negotiations with the Poles, And that was done despite American protests over what had happened even to the April promises on adequate and effective compensation.

But in the end the Poles did not obtain much. Polish assets which had been blocked in the United States were released in return for a new and general understanding concerning compensation for nationalized American property. After some hesitation and struggle within the State Department, the Poles were finally told that the credits they had asked for would have to wait until after the election. This was a victory for those in the Department who did not want to extend any assistance to the Poles if they did not hold free elections. Ambassador Lane had initially belonged to this group, but later came to change his views. Byrnes and Under Secretary of State Acheson also seem to have had doubts as to how wise it was to tie American credits to free elections,

The fact that Poland, even as late as 1916, enjoyed a special position in Eastern Europe by having contacts with American authorities for purposes of credit arrangements was mainly due to one circumstance connected with the Polish request. Both Byrnes and several others in the State Department gave the Poles special treatment because the loan was to be used to increase coal production which in turn could be used to reduce the coal shortage in Western Europe. Even the British, who earlier had tried to induce the Americans not to give economic assistance to Poland, favored a coal credit if this would increase exports to Western Europe. The difficulty in having such a guarantee written into any aid agreement was probably one reason for the credit in the end being tied to the holding of the elections.

This economic-political connection meant the end of the last Polish hopes for credit. When it came to political standards Poland clearly did not justify any departure from the now entrenched American policy of not giving economic aid to Eastern Europe. In early January 1947, before the Polish election, the United States first sent a note to the Soviet Union and then one to Poland which in fact said the Americans did not think there was any possibility that the upcoming election would be free. After the election had been held the State Department sent out a statement saying that what it had feared would happen had now come true. In early February Truman lectured the new Polish Ambassador on his Government's failure to live up to the Yalta and Potsdam commitments, and in March Bliss Lane resigned as American Ambassador to Poland. in order to "speak

and write openly, without being hampered by diplomatic convention, regarding the present tragedy in Poland."

While all economic assistance for Poland had been stopped, the Poles still received humanitarian aid from the United States. In February 1947 Truman even declared that with the exception of Hungary, Poland would be the only eligible country in Eastern Europe for participation in the large-scale national American program to succeed the UNRRA organization. Hungary was included for political reasons connected with the death struggle of the Nagy Government, while Poland probably was on the list of qualified countries since it was the one country in Europe which had received the largest aid from UNRRA. To have excluded Poland would have meant America's giving up all pretentions of the new program being anything more than an instrument in the struggle with the Soviet Union. But after Poland refused to take part in the Marshall Plan program its eligibility was withdrawn from the 350 million dollar humanitarian scheme. The new American Ambassador to Poland soon concluded that Polish-American relations were frozen and that the "only purpose in being here is just to show the people that we are here."

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John Crowe Ransom

VAUNTING OAK

He is a tower unleaning. But how will he not break,
If Heaven assault him with full wind and sleet,
And what uproar tall trees concumbent make!

More than a hundred years, more than a hundred feet
Naked he rears against the cold skies eruptive;
Only his temporal twigs are unsure of seat,

And the frail leaves of a season, which are susceptive
Of the mad humors of wind, and turn and flee
In panic round the stem on which they are captive.

Now a certain heart, too young and mortally
Linked with an unbeliever of bitter blood,
Observed, as an eminent witness of life, the tree,

And exulted, wrapped in a phantasy of good:
»Be the great oak for its long winterings
Our love's symbol, better than the summer's brood.»

Then the venerable oak, delivered of his pangs,
Put forth profuse his green banners of peace
And testified to her with innumerable tongues.

And what but she fetch me up to the steep place
Where the oalr vaunted? A flat where birdsong flew
Had to be traversed; and a quick populace

Of daisies, and yellow kinds; and here she knew,
Who had been instructed of much mortality,
Better than brag in this distraught purlieu.

Above the little and their dusty tombs was he
Standing, sheer on his hill, not much soiled over
By the knobs and broken boughs of an old tree,

And she murmured, »Established, you see him there! forever.»
But, that her pitiful error be undone,
I knocked on his house loudly, a sorrowing lover,

And drew forth like a funeral a hollow tone.
»The old gentleman,, I grieved, »holds gallantly,
But before our joy shall have lapsed, even, will be gone.»

I knocked more sternly, and his dolorous cry
Boomed till its loud reverberance outsounded
The singing of bees; or the coward birds that fly

Otherwhere with their songs when summer is sped,
And if they stayed would perish miserably;
Or the tears of a girl remembering her dread.

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