



The Train From Moscow: The Road to Reopening the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, June–July 1945

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Abstract¹. This article offers a detailed insight into negotiations regarding coalition government for Poland that took place in Moscow in June 1945, with special attention directed at the work of the U.S. embassy. The key protagonist is the translator, a U.S. intelligence officer of Polish ancestry William J. Tonesk. This text addresses the question on how well were the Americans informed about the conditions in Poland and the internal dynamics within Polish political groups as they sought to implement decisions made at the Yalta Conference. Looking through the microhistorical lenses it becomes obvious that, despite access to information, the conditions for talks orchestrated by the Soviets determined their outcome.

Keywords: *Polish Government of National Unity, Tripartite Commission in Moscow 1945, U.S. Intelligence, William J. Tonesk, American-Polish relations.*

Anotacija. Straipsnyje išsamiai apžvelgiamos derybos dėl Lenkijos koalicinės vyriausybės, vykusios Maskvoje 1945 m. birželį, ypatingą dėmesį skiriant JAV ambasados darbui. Pagrindinis tyrimo veikėjas yra lenkų kilmės vertėjas ir JAV žvalgybos pareigūnas Williamas J. Toneskas. Nagrinėjamas klausimas, kaip gerai amerikiečiai buvo informuoti apie sąlygas Lenkijoje ir Lenkijos politinių grupių vidaus dinamiką, kai siekė įgyvendinti Jaltos konferencijoje priimtus

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sprendimus. Žvelgiant iš mikroistorinės perspektyvos tampa akivaizdu, kad, nepaisant prieigos prie informacijos, sovietų organizuotos derybų sąlygos lėmė jų baigtį.

Esminiai žodžiai: *Lenkijos nacionalinės vienybės vyriausybė, Trišalė komisija Maskvoje 1945 m., JAV žvalgyba, William J. Tonesk, Amerikos ir Lenkijos santykiai.*

Introduction

No postwar history of Poland can possibly start without mentioning “Yalta”. While it refers to the Crimean Conference 4–11 February 1945, in the Polish historical narrative it carries a negative connotation and is often used as a synonym to “betrayal.”² This is a sentiment not necessarily shared by citizens of countries in East Central Europe south of Poland’s borders. For some “Yalta” carried the promise of free elections embedded in the “Declaration of Liberated Europe.”³ In the Polish case, the heads of states representing the United States, United Kingdom and the Soviet Union (the Big Three), agreed during the conference that there shall be a postwar coalition government for the country. They sanctioned that it would include Stalin’s puppet government for Poland established already in 1944: “The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad.” The expected result was the Provisional Government of National Unity (PGNU) tasked with “holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot.”⁴ The negotiations leading to the creation of the PGNU were assigned to the Tripartite Commission consisting of (in the order they were listed in the source document): Vyacheslav Molotov (Soviet minister of foreign affairs), W. Averell Harriman

² Beyond the political setup discussed in this article, the most common grievance among the Poles relates to the shifting of Polish borders about 150 miles West (smaller by about 20%, with previous German territories making up about 48% of postwar Poland). LENCZNAROWICZ, Jan. *Jalta. W kręgu mitów założycielskich polskiej emigracji politycznej, 1944–1956*. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2009, p. 58–71; ŁUKASIEWICZ, Sławomir (ed.). *Jalta. Rzeczywistość, mit i pamięć*. Warsaw: IPN, 2019, p. 7–12.

³ SWAIN, Geoffrey; SWAIN, Nigel. *Eastern Europe since 1945*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 24–25; KENEZ, Peter. *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets. The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944–1948*. Cambridge NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 94–95; PUNDEFF, Marin. Bulgaria. In Joseph Held (ed.), *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 99; MAZURKIEWICZ, Anna. *Voice of the Silenced Peoples In the Global Cold War. The Assembly of Captive European Nations*. Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2021, p. xii–xv. MAJEWSKI, Piotr. Jalta z perspektywy czechosłowackiej. In *Jalta. Rzeczywistość, mit i pamięć*. Warsaw: IPN, 2019, p. 215.

⁴ 1945 02 11 Report of the Crimea Conference, Communiqué Issued at the End of the Yalta Conference, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*. Washington: GPO, 1955, p. 972–973, accessed 2024 10 24. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Malta/d500>

(U.S. ambassador to Moscow), Sir Archibald Clark Kerr (British ambassador to Moscow). Its first meeting, of what would be 11 in all, took place on 23 February 1945.⁵

In the American diplomatic correspondence of 1945 Poland is usually referred to as a “problem.”⁶ In the English-language literature the creation of the PGNU is often mentioned, yet almost no attention is given to the conditions surrounding the compromise, such as locations, slate of participants, order of meetings, ill-fated jokes over cocktails, blackmail, and fear. The Polish literature on the topic focuses largely on macro scale politics and internal dynamics within the three groups of Poles.⁷ There is no microhistorical study of the “Moscow Conference” – as the talks held between 17–21 June 1945 were sometimes referred to by contemporaries.⁸ Such method is useful in reconstructing the historical moment at which multiple processes coalesced. It also advances our understanding of these events from the individual perspective. The essence of problem for the current analysis was neatly summarized by Norman Davies. Describing the Soviet takeover of Poland he wrote:

*One may despise the Soviets’ manipulative techniques; but one is forced to admire their ingenuity. Layer after layer after layer of interlocking political control mechanisms enables Moscow to hold its dependents in check at every turn.*⁹

This article offers a detailed insight into what happened in Moscow in the course of the post-Yalta negotiations regarding government for Poland taken from the American vantage point. It looks into the circumstances, dynamics, and U.S. intelligence reporting of the talks leading to the creation of the government for postwar Poland. As such, it provides a fresh take on the American position during the talks in Moscow. Between February and June 1945, the Tripartite Commission spent most of the time on negotiations leading to the selection of the slate of Polish participants for the talks. The microhistorical focus of this text is adjusted to 15 June to 5 July 1945 when the Tripartite Commission held meetings – both formal and informal – with the three groups of Poles.

⁵ 1945 02 24 The Ambassador to the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, Moscow. *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, Europe*. Washington: GPO, 1969, Vol. 5, p. 124, accessed 2024 10 24. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v05/d113>

⁶ There are multiple examples of the “Polish Problem” rhetoric in the *FRUS* volumes related to the wartime conferences. One example: 1945 05 14 J[oseph] C. G[rew]. Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State. Memorandum of Conversation. *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, 1945. Washington: GPO, 1960, Vol. 1, p. 10–11, accessed 2025 01 10. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv01/d8>

⁷ Within the large body of Polish literature the most exhaustive account is available in: ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, 1085 p. See also: KAMIŃSKI, Marek Kazimierz. *W obliczu sowieckiego ekspansjonizmu. Polityka Stanów Zjednoczonych i Wielkiej Brytanii wobec Polski i Czechosłowacji 1945–1948*. Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN-Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2005, p. 11–71.

⁸ KORBOŃSKI, Stefan. *W imieniu Rzeczypospolitej...* Warsaw: IPN, 2009, p. 412.

⁹ DAVIES, Norman. *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 96.

The aim is to recreate the circumstances in Moscow that facilitated implementation of the decisions made in Yalta and within it the role of the American Embassy staff. How well were the diplomats and intelligence officers informed about conditions in Poland and internal dynamics within Polish political groups? Who translated their conversations? Were they fully aware that the process of forging a compromise leading to the creation of the PGNU finalized the way for communist political takeover in Poland?

Studying the sources that illuminate the way the U.S. embassy worked with the Polish delegates, and then locating these within the temporal and interpersonal frameworks advances our knowledge on the American position regarding the post-World War II government for Poland. While within such an approach details matter, the adopted method allows to demonstrate major processes that led to solidifying of the Soviet grip of Poland. Furthermore, it shows how the U.S. proactively sought out a compromise, eager to reopen its embassy in Warsaw. The title of the article refers to the circumstances in which preparations for reopening of the U.S. diplomatic post began. In this case, reopening the embassy is synonymous with withdrawing recognition from the Polish government-in-exile in London. Indirectly, it also points to the real facilitator of American recognition of the PGNU – Moscow.

The sources used to revisit the story of American road to establish relations with a postwar government in Poland included: Averell Harriman's Moscow files, William J. Tonesk's papers, Arhtur Bliss Lane's papers, Foreign Relations of the United States series, and memoirs. The key protagonist whose account guides this text is a U.S. intelligence officer of Polish ancestry, William J. Tonesk. He was born in Schenectady, N.Y., in 1906 as Władysław Jan Toniecki.¹⁰ During World War II, Tonesk served in the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI). Because of his Polish-American background, fluency in Polish, and previous experience of having studied and traveled in East Central Europe, Tonesk was assigned tasks pertaining to Polish matters. In Moscow he served as a translator for oral and written communications, but he also authored reports from meetings with the Polish delegates. Tonesk's knowledge of and sentimental passion for Poland combined with his loyalty and allegiance to the United States bridge the gap between the U.S. historiography in which the "Polish problem" gets resolved in the course of negotiations, and the Polish one in which the "Yalta Betrayal" was implemented. From the moment the Poles arrived in Moscow (mid-June 1945), Tonesk interpreted for Harriman during the June commission meetings and almost always when the ambassador met separately with the Polish representatives, and this shall serve as a main narrative thread.

¹⁰ MAZURKIEWICZ, Anna. Launching the Career of William J. Tonesk of Schenectady, New York: A Case Study in Polonia's Support of Academic Development of Talented Youth in the 1930s. *Polish American Studies*, 2024, t. 81, Nr. 2, p. 30–56.

The Tripartite Commission and the three groups of Poles

In July 1944 the Soviets created a mock government for a future, Nazi-free Poland. The Polish acronym was PKWN (Polish Committee for National Liberation). On New Year's Eve this body announced it was now the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland, promptly recognized as such by the Soviet Union on 4 January 1945. On 1 February 1945, this government relocated from Lublin to Warsaw. According to the Yalta agreement, announced on 11 February 1945, the Provisional Government functioning in Poland was supposed to be reorganized on a broader democratic basis, with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland and from abroad.¹¹ There was no deadline, and – more troublingly – the recognition of the Provisional Government by the U.S. and U.K. was not contingent on free elections. On the contrary, the mere formation of the government paved the way for the U.S. and U.K. to establish diplomatic relations with it.

Interestingly, a comparison of published versions of the agreement in English and in Russian (translated into Polish) produces a significant discrepancy. The English version reads that the commission was authorized

*to consult in the first instance in Moscow with members of the present Provisional Government and with other Polish democratic leaders from within Poland, and from abroad.*¹²

The Polish version, published on the basis of the Russian language text of the Yalta agreements, says:

*to consult in Moscow in the first instance with members of the present Provisional Government and with other Polish democratic leaders from within Poland, and from abroad.*¹³

The difference is significant, for the earliest group of people to arrive in Moscow were indeed those already designated by Stalin to take over the country: Bolesław Bierut, Edward Osóbka-Morawski and Col. Gen. Michał Rola-Żymierski. While the communist Poles' visits to Moscow were a common occurrence, this visit took place on 14–20 February 1945, so only three days after the Yalta conference. It was directly related to the work on the PGNU, and yet these Poles did not meet Harriman or Clark Kerr, but only Stalin and Molotov.¹⁴ Despite the fact that they came from Warsaw, they

¹¹ Report of the Crimea Conference, 973.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Komunikat z konferencji krymskiej, Jałta 11 lutego 1945. In: *Teheran-Jałta-Poczdam: dokumenty konferencji szefów rządów trzech wielkich mocarstw*. KiW: Warszawa 1970, p. 207.

¹⁴ 1945 03 04 The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, Moscow. *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, Europe*, Vol. 5, p. 142, accessed 2024 10 24. <https://history.state.gov/historical-documents/frus1945v05/d126>

were commonly referred by contemporaries as the “Lublin Poles.” The other two groups of Poles “within Poland, and from abroad” described in the Yalta communique could also be described by using their locations: London and Warsaw.

The legitimate Polish government had to evacuate from the country in the early days of the Second World War.¹⁵ Following the Nazi attack, Poland was attacked by the Soviets on 17 September 1939. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact signed between the two totalitarian states on 23 August 1939 provided for a Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland (and the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states). The U.S. (and U.K.) continued to recognize the Polish government-in-exile, with Anthony Drexel Biddle, who fled Poland in dramatic circumstances in September 1939, remaining American ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile until 1 December 1943.

On 17 September 1939, Poland broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR. With Hitler's attack on the USSR in July 1941, the Polish government in London was persuaded by the West to sign an agreement with Moscow – at this point the Western ally. The Sikorski-Mayski deal resulted in the release of Polish troops (interned by the Soviets in 1939). The released soldiers were allowed to leave the Soviet Union and formed a nucleus of the Polish Armed Forces in the West (30,000 as of mid-August 1941). The brief period of reinstated Polish-Soviet relations ended abruptly, when in April 1943 the first graves of what would become 22,000 Polish officers murdered by the NKVD were discovered by the Nazis. The Polish government in London knew these were the people who had been missing since 1940. Polish-Soviet relations were broken off again. At the time the Polish government-in-exile and its armed forces (including intelligence services) were closely integrated with the West (notably with the U.K., including a Polish section at Special Operations Executive).¹⁶ These were the politicians indicated in the Yalta agreements as “Poles from abroad.” The problem was that the legitimate Polish government (in London) rejected the Yalta agreements on 13 February 1945 and thus was not willing to participate in any negotiations leading to the creation of a new government for Poland.¹⁷

To implement Yalta provisions regarding Poland, some token representation of “Poles from abroad” had to be found. The Tripartite Commission used Stanisław Mikołajczyk, who was in exile in London at the time. He was one of the leaders of the Polish agrarians, the strongest anti-communist political force in the country. Mikołajczyk enjoyed the support of the elderly party leader Wincenty Witos, who remained

¹⁵ As a sign of protest and defiance against Soviet domination, the Polish government-in-exile continued its operations in London until 1990 when Lech Wałęsa became the first popularly elected president of Poland.

¹⁶ TEBINKA, Jacek. ZAPALEC, Anna. *Polska w brytyjskiej strategii wspierania ruchu oporu. Historia Sekcji Polskiej Kierownictwa Operacji Specjalnych (SOE)*. Warsaw: Neriton, 2022, p. 509–525.

¹⁷ WOLSZA, Tadeusz. Reakcje i komentarze rządu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej oraz stronnictw politycznych w „polskim Londynie” po ustaleniach konferencji Wielkiej Trójki w Jaltie. In *Jalta. Rzeczywistość, mit i pamięć*, p. 88.

in Poland. The émigré leader had previously served as a prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile from 14 July 1943 to 24 November 1944. Initially considering modes of cooperation with the Polish Communists he had traveled to Moscow in July 1944 and again in October 1944. Following the latter talks with the Soviets he resigned from his post. It was because he learned from Molotov, in the presence of both Stalin and Churchill, that Poland's future (borders and government) had been already decided at the Tehran Conference.¹⁸ In June 1945 he was back in Moscow negotiating within the constraints imposed by Yalta.

As Mikołajczyk adopted a “realist” position striving to save whatever was left of Polish agency in administering the elections, he acted against the will of the Polish government in London.¹⁹ The decision to return and engage in coalition with the Communists was not an easy one to make, especially given the disruptive potential for the exiled political milieu.²⁰ Mikołajczyk had to be persuaded, also by the Western powers to accept the invitation to Moscow. When he finally agreed on 12 June 1945, the Tripartite Commission had obtained their token. In his memoirs Mikołajczyk phrased it differently:

*I became the chief bone of contention in fruitless sessions in Moscow. The American and British members of the Committee [Tripartite Commission] insisted that I must be among those invited for the discussions.*²¹

The one last group mentioned in the Yalta agreements were the Polish politicians who remained in the country during the war. The organization of the Polish Underground State was coordinated with the government-in-exile, and included both military (Home Army) and civilian sections. Already in January 1944, responding to the creation of parliament-like council (KRN) by the Communists, representatives of major democratic parties in the country established the Council of National Unity sanctioned by the in-country Delegate of the Polish government-in-exile. Unlike their colleagues in London, on 22 February 1945, the Council of National Unity (in Poland) adopted a resolution confirming they were ready to join discussions on a future government for postwar Poland.²² They realized that the alternative was likely to settle for the Communist-installed government.

In March 1945, as the war was coming to an end, the Polish government was still in London. Molotov was now a member of the Tripartite Commission (or “Polish

¹⁸ MIKOŁAJCZYK, Stanisław. *The Rape of Poland. Pattern of Soviet Aggression*. Westport CT: Greenwood press, Publishers, 1948, p. 93–95.

¹⁹ GMITRUK, Janusz. Wstęp. In BAGIEŃSKI, Witold et al. (eds.). *Stanisław Mikołajczyk w dokumentach aparatu bezpieczeństwa*. Vol. 1: *Działalność w latach 1945–1947*. Warszawa: IPN, 2010, p. 26–28.

²⁰ ŁUKASIEWICZ, Sławomir. A Shadow Party System. The Political Activities of Cold War Polish Exiles. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 2023, t. 25, Nr. 1, p. 46–74.

²¹ MIKOŁAJCZYK, Stanisław. *The Rape of Poland. Pattern of Soviet Aggression*. Westport CT: Greenwood press, Publishers, 1948, p. 113.

²² KORBOŃSKI, Stefan. *W imieniu Rzeczypospolitej...* Warsaw: IPN, 2009, p. 411–412.

commission” as the group was referred to by contemporaries). Given Molotov’s earlier role, when invitations for talks arrived to the members of the political representation in Poland many of the leaders were weary. The Tripartite Commission spent months negotiating individual names to be invited for talks. Many were rejected by the Soviets, others – like Wincenty Witos – whom the Soviets wanted to join the talks to legitimize their actions, declined.²³

William J. Tonesk’s assignment to Moscow

Tonesk’s first war-time assignment was Cairo. In North Africa, he maintained contact with the intelligence officers of the Polish Armed Forces in the West (loyal to the Polish government-in-exile).²⁴ By 1944, the 2nd Polish Corps led by Gen. Władysław Anders were already fighting their way up the Apennine Peninsula, with the battle of Monte Cassino (17 January–19 May 1944) becoming a symbol of their bravery and sacrifice. The last officers of the Anders’ troops left Cairo in December 1944 but the intelligence unit “T” of the Second Department of the Polish General Staff was maintained in the region. Tasked with collecting intelligence on the Soviet Union, Polish intelligence officers worked out of multiple bases in the Middle East, including nine men in Cairo, where Tonesk was based.²⁵

Ten days after the conclusion of the Big Three talks in Yalta, on 21 February 1945, the order came in for Tonesk to go to Moscow in place of Marcel E. Malige. The latter previously served as American consul general at Martinique and his name for the job was originally suggested by S. Pinkney Tuck (U.S. minister to Egypt) after consultations with Arthur Bliss Lane – the ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile. However, after it became apparent that Malige did not speak Polish, Grew (acting secretary of state) informed Harriman (in Moscow) that “DEPT will endeavor to make arrangements with Navy to send from here Lt. William J. Tonesk, native-born American of Polish origin who speaks fluent Polish, some Russian, and Czech and who is assigned to Mr. Lane’s staff.”²⁶

²³ Witos was also kidnapped on 31 March 1945 and transported to Warsaw for talks. He was driven back home after five days. ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 242–243, 283.

²⁴ Tonesk was to report to the Naval Section of the Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Collection Agency, for the Middle East, “for intelligence duties.” He served in North Africa from 23 March 1944 to 23 December 1944.

²⁵ PEPLŃSKI, Andrzej. *Wywiad Polskich Sił Zbrojnych na Zachodzie 1939–1945*. Warszawa: AWM, 1995, p. 153–157.

²⁶ 1945 02 20 Grew (acting) to American embassy, Moscow. Telegram. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park MD (NARA II), RG 59, Decimal File 1945–49, 123: Personnel, box 817, folder: Malige, Marcel E.

Lane was appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt in September 1944 but never traveled to London, awaiting further political developments. Tonesk, formerly a U.S. Navy (ONI) liaison to the Anders troops was originally ordered to join Lane's staff. He did not until July 1945. It is likely that the embassy staff dispatch was pending the actual arrival of the U.S. ambassador to either London or Warsaw. In accordance with the Yalta agreements, Lane awaited the results of negotiations leading to the creation of the PGNU. When he eventually arrived in Warsaw with his staff on 31 July 1945, the government he was attached to had nothing to do with the legitimate authorities residing in London. Prior to reexamining the negotiations in Moscow leading to the establishment of the PGNU to which Lane was attached, it should be borne in mind that Tonesk was in charge of preparations for Lane's arrival to Warsaw.

Tonesk arrived in Moscow on 8 March 1945 via Bermuda, Casablanca, Cairo, Tehran, and Stalingrad. This occurred three days after the fourth meeting of the "Polish commission." His ID card as an employee of a foreign military mission in the USSR was issued on 6 April 1945, initially expiring in three weeks. Once it became obvious that there was little progress on the list of Poles to be invited to Moscow, his permit was prolonged to 31 August 1945.²⁷ Tonesk's pocket calendar for the months of March, April and May seems to indicate a surprisingly uneventful period. It is devoid of mention of such pivotal events as the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (12 April 1945), the war's end in Europe (8 May 1945), and the opening of the U.N. founding conference in San Francisco (25 April–26 June 1945).²⁸ Based on the minutes of the meetings of the Tripartite Commission on Poland, Tonesk did not take part in their Spring meetings either. It becomes apparent that he was awaiting the moment his task became due – that is – the moment the three groups of Poles arrived in Moscow for negotiations. This occurred in mid-June.

However, there were two earlier visits of Poles in Moscow in relation to the work of the commission. One were the communists who visited their handlers from 19–26 April 1945. The purpose of their visit was the signing of a Polish-Soviet friendship treaty, assuring close political, military and economic cooperation framework for two decades.²⁹ Neither signatory minded that the Yalta-envisioned provisional government for post-

²⁷ 1945 04 06 Карточка сотрудника Иностранной военной миссии в СССР, Xenia Tonesk archive, Tucson, Arizona. Copies of the documents from Xenia Tonesk's private archive are in Author's possession.

²⁸ Polish government representatives were not invited to the UN founding conference due to ongoing negotiations. Poland's absence, despite being a founding member of the UN, was dramatized during a piano performance by Arthur Rubinstein at the inaugural ceremony. ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 247.

²⁹ 1945 04 21. Moskwa. Układ o przyjaźni, pomocy wzajemnej i współpracy powojennej między Rzeczpospolitą Polską i Związkiem Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich. *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich. T. VIII: January 1944-December 1945*. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1974, p. 443–445.

war Poland was not yet established. The other group of Poles who were in Moscow in March did not come of their own will. Invited for talks in Poland, they were kidnapped and ended up in Lubyanka prison. This story and its timing mattered greatly for the context and atmosphere in which the negotiations were carried out.

On 27–28 March 1945, the leaders of the anti-communist underground from Poland were invited by a Soviet military officer (Pimenov) for talks in Pruszków, near Warsaw. The man who signed the invitation never existed. The invitation actually came from one of the Stalin's NKVD's hatchet men: Ivan Serov.³⁰ Not aware but not naïve, scared and mindful of previous acts of treachery and violence, the Polish leaders decided to enter the talks regardless. Some thought they were being flown to London; others debated what clothes suited governmental talks best.³¹ Among them were Jan Stanisław Jankowski (London's delegate in Poland, deputy prime minister), Gen. Leopold Okulicki (last commander of the Home Army), Kazimierz Płużak (chairman of the Council of National Unity), and 13 other men. All were kidnapped on 28 March 1945, their fate not publicly confirmed until 6 May 1945 (TASS communique).³² These men were never to be invited to the negotiating table managed by the Soviets.

At this time, the American embassy became aware of what happened. One man on its staff had already made up his mind as to the likelihood of witnessing free and democratic Poland emerge from the rubble of World War II. In a telegram to the secretary of state of 14 May 1945 George F. Kennan clearly expressed his opinion:

*We are never going to have at this juncture anything like a free Poland. In the face of this situation, our position today is a clear one on which we can safely rest our case. If we join with the Russians in cooking up some façade government to mask NKVD control (and that is all they would agree to today) and then help them to put it across by recognizing it and sending our representatives there to play their part in the show, all the issues will be confused, and we shall have tacitly given the stamp of approval to the tactics which were followed by the Russians in March and April in connection with the work of the Commission.*³³

This is exactly what happened. Quite unexpectedly for Kennan, in late May his long-awaited permission to travel to Siberia was granted. On 9 June 1945, he set off

³⁰ NAIMARK, Norman M. *Stalin and the Fate of Europe. The Postwar Struggle for Sovereignty*. Cambridge Mass.-London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019, p. 199–200.

³¹ The author was one of the sixteen arrested leaders. STYPUŁKOWSKI, Zbigniew. *Zaproszenie do Moskwy*. Warszawa: Editions Spotkania, 1991, p. 306–307.

³² ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 188–313; Komunikat Agencji TASS'a w odpowiedzi na interpelacje brytyjskie o aresztowaniu działaczy Polski podziemnej, 5 maja 1945. *Proces szesnastu w dokumentach*. Kraków: Bez cięć [samizdat], 1985, p. 31–32.

³³ 1945 05 14 The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, Europe*, Vol. 5, p. 296, accessed 2024 10 24. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v05/d217>

on a journey that lasted until after the Polish talks were over.³⁴ Given his role, attitude towards the Soviets and the unwillingness of Harriman to argue with Kennan, his departure just before the resumption of negotiations seemed not coincidental.³⁵ Long before Kennan's "long telegram" had a chance of altering U.S. foreign policy, his understanding of what was at stake and how the Soviets got their game was precisely on point. However, rather than paying attention to such analysis and reconsidering the American options, the U.S. embassy welcomed a special visitor from Washington, the late president's aide and close friend: Harry Hopkins.

In Moscow from 26 May to 6 June 1945, Harry Hopkins secured six meetings with Stalin.³⁶ These set the tone for the meetings that followed. Hopkins, who advised Harry S. Truman, was sympathetic to the Soviet agenda.³⁷ Harriman appreciated the fact that Hopkins warmed up Stalin. After his departure, the U.S. ambassador found "Soviet officials and senior Army officers less constrained and much more cordial."³⁸ Hopkins treated Molotov as the head of the Tripartite Commission, which he was not. The post was supposed to be rotated. The American visitor's intervention produced an impression that the U.S. agreed the new government for Poland had to be set up based on the Provisional Government (Lublin Poles).³⁹ The Polish (London) government's ambassador to the U.S. – Jan Ciechanowski – recalled Hopkins' comment upon returning from Moscow:

*A friend of Harry Hopkins and mine told me that on Harry's return from Moscow, he had remonstrated him for having agreed to conclude with Stalin 'a deal so unfair to Poland.' He quoted Harry Hopkins's reply: 'After all, what does it matter? The Poles are like the Irish. They are never satisfied with anything, anyhow.'*⁴⁰

One solution to publicly deal with the "Polish Problem" was to produce the impression that it was up to the Poles to form the government. The illusion of returning agency to the Poles must be seen in the context of who made decisions at Yalta, who selected people to be invited to Moscow, and how the obstruction of the legitimate, wartime Polish government was dealt with. Mikołajczyk, the former prime minister

³⁴ GADDIS, John Lewis. *George F. Kennan. An American Life*. New York: Penguin Group, 2011, p. 197.

³⁵ GADDIS, John Lewis. *George F. Kennan. An American Life*. New York: Penguin Group, 2011, p. 184. See also: WANDYCZ, Piotr S. Harriman a Polska. *Zeszyty Historyczne*. 1987, t. 79, p. 88–passim.

³⁶ 1945 06 06 Memorandum by the Assistant to the Secretary of State (Bohlen), Memorandum of 6th Conversation at the Kremlin, 6:00 PM June 6. *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. 1, accessed 2024 10 24. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv01/d29>

³⁷ ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 276–280.

³⁸ 1945 06 09 Paraphrase of Navy Cable. Library of Congress. Manuscript Division. Harriman Papers, Moscow Files. box 180, folder 1.

³⁹ 1945 06 15 Minutes of the Eighth Session of Polish Commission, Kremlin. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 3.

⁴⁰ The Author was a Polish ambassador to the United States during the war years. CIECHANOWSKI, Jan. *Defeat in Victory*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1947, p. 382–383.

returning from exile, was used as a token. The negotiation process was carefully staged by the Soviets, from organizing separate meetings with the Lublin Poles to the chilling impact of the trial of “the Sixteen” which was closely coordinated with the progress of the talks. Were the Americans monitoring these talks aware of what was going on? Tonesk’s memorandums attached to his translations come in handy to investigate how much nuanced was the American perception of the negotiations.

To understand what the non-communist Poles were saying to the Americans and why, it must be remembered that their options were limited. They were stuck in Moscow with Molotov at the same table. They had to consider that their friends were already in prison, the Soviet army and NKVD were already in Poland, and the Provisional Government (Lublin Poles) had already signed a friendship treaty with the Soviets. Signing a compromise deal might have been the only way to stay in the game. After all, Yalta also promised free elections.

Negotiations with the Poles

With Kennan gone to explore the footprints of his great uncle left behind in Siberia, the person present in the negotiating room was Francis B. Stevens (second secretary of the U.S. embassy). Like Tonesk, he was born in Schenectady, N.Y., and participated in the State Department training program administered by the Institute of International Education. In 1935 Tonesk was a fellow of his in Prague, and Stevens was in Paris.⁴¹ On 15 June 1945, Tonesk scribbled in his calendar the text of a message received from Stevens: “robota zaczyna się” [the job begins].⁴²

This was related to the arrival of the first of the three teams. On 13 June 1945, the Warsaw Communists (Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski, Władysław Gomułka and Władysław Kowalski) arrived in Moscow.⁴³ Stevens informed Washington of the warm welcome extended by the Soviets. There was a guard of honor at the airport, foreign diplomats and a team of senior Soviet authorities (Molotov, Nikolai Bulganin and Andrey Vishinsky) ready to shake hands with the Lublin Poles.⁴⁴ Considering that the Polish Communists visited Moscow on regular basis this was quite a welcome.

⁴¹ [no date] Biographic Note, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, Tonesk Papers, box 1, f. bio; PROPAS, Frederic L. Creating a Hard Line Toward Russia: The Training of State Department Soviet Experts, 1927–1937. *Diplomatic History*, 1984, t. 8, Nr. 3, p. 217.

⁴² Tonesk’s calendar, entry for 15 June 1945, Xenia Tonesk archive.

⁴³ Identifying them by party membership in 1945 may be misleading for at least some maintained they were nonpartisan (like Bierut), or affiliated with another group (Kowalski – with pro-communist agrarians). In fact, they were secret members of the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR), with Bierut playing one of leadership roles, at odds with Gomułka – party leader.

⁴⁴ 1945 06 14 FBS [Francis B. Stevens, Second Secretary of Embassy and Vice Consul in Moscow] to Secretary of State. Telegram. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 2.

Realizing the moral predicaments of the Poles “from abroad” who had agreed to come to Moscow, the Americans and the British tried to publicly show their support and appreciation. Both Harriman and Clark Kerr personally welcomed Mikołajczyk and Jan Stańczyk who arrived on Saturday (16 June 1945).⁴⁵ They were accompanied by Jan Drohojowski, a Polish diplomat, who recalled the Soviet chief of protocol awaiting the guests at the airport. One other traveler from London was Stefania Liebermann – widow of the former minister of justice in London (a socialist), and the only member of the group who spoke Russian.⁴⁶ Not only was there no Soviet guard of honor, but uncertainty, if not fear, accompanied them all.

They came just “in time for a reception given by Molotov to all of the Polish delegates. The cordiality with which the members of the various groups met each other was significant and the informal conversations gave an indication that all realized the vital importance of the conference coming to a successful conclusion” – said the U.S. Embassy cable.⁴⁷ The “cordiality” may refer to the meeting at the airport noted by Tonesk, where prof. Stanisław Kutrzeba (president of the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków), prof. Adam Krzyżanowski (Alliance of Democrats, SD) and Zygmunt Żuławski (socialist party), all handpicked as representatives of the political milieu “from the country”, met the Poles arriving from London. Tonesk noted in his pocket calendar that the reception at “Hammer’s” (Polish: Młot from Molotov) began at 9:15 p.m., while the Poles arrived at 7 p.m.⁴⁸ In his memoir, Drohojowski also mentioned the evening party at the Spaso House. It was where he met Michael Winch of the British intelligence and “Tonesk, an American of Polish descent, who in the Washington office of the Pan American Airways sent me to China three years ago. Winch installed a radio received in Mikołajczyk’s apartment. Tonesk was dressed up [*przebrany* in Polish] as a U.S. Navy officer. Both were soon to operate in Warsaw.”⁴⁹ Having just arrived, Drohojowski had no difficulty seeing Western intelligence operatives in the room.

Tonesk’s tiny calendar contains plenty of blue ink notes on meetings, consultations and cocktail receptions for the dates that the consultations with the Polish leaders from three political centers were conducted: 17–21 June 1945. He does not mention, however, that on 15 June 1945, the Soviets announced the beginning of the trial of the 16 leaders kidnapped in March.⁵⁰ The trial lasted from 18 to 21 June 1945. It was in such a context that the democratic leaders from within Poland (non-Communists) and from

⁴⁵ ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 315.

⁴⁶ DROHOJOWSKI, Jan. *Jana Drohojowskiego wspomnienia dyplomatyczne*. Warsaw: PIW, 1959, p. 253–254.

⁴⁷ 1945 06 17 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable to Dept. 2136. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 3.

⁴⁸ Tonesk’s calendar, entry for 16 June 1945. Xenia Tonesk archive.

⁴⁹ DROHOJOWSKI, Jan. *Jana Drohojowskiego wspomnienia dyplomatyczne*. Warsaw: PIW, 1959, 254–255. I thank Ron Landa for alerting me to this encounter.

⁵⁰ 1945 06 15 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable from London. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 3.

abroad (London) were arriving in Moscow. The timing and event coordination by the Soviet hosts of the “Moscow conference” was effective in fostering a tense atmosphere.

The indictment against the sixteen leaders included: the organization of underground armed detachments of the Home Army in the rear of the Red Army, the establishment of the underground military-political organization *Niepodległość* [Independence], or NIE [NO]; terroristic, diversionary, and espionage activity of underground armed units of the Home Army and NIE; work of illegal radio receivers and transmitters of the Home Army and underground Polish “Government” in the rear of the Red Army, and a plan for preparing military participation in the bloc with Germany against the Soviet Union.⁵¹ Therefore, in a perfidious way smearing the anti-Nazi fight by the Polish underground, the Soviet court established that the organizers and leaders of the Polish underground conspired to create a Polish-German bloc against the USSR.⁵² Reports from the Western press collected by one of the accused – Zygmunt Stypułkowski – confirm that Stalin’s plan to turn imprisoned politicians (invited for talks on the coalition government in March 1945) into saboteurs worked.⁵³ As the trial received significant media coverage, the American embassy decided it would not send additional details to Washington.⁵⁴ In its general commentary, it adequately noticed, though, that “the main objective of the prosecution is to fix responsibility on the London government for the anti-Soviet policy of the Home Army and underground government as well as for all subversive activities conducted against Soviet authorities and the Red Army.”⁵⁵ In Harriman’s interpretation, the Soviets also hoped to sow doubts among the British as to the credibility of information coming from the Poles concerning the conduct of Russians in Poland.

Some information and comments on the trial are to be found within the ambassadors’ collections and in *FRUS*, but not in Tonesk’s files. No matter how busy he was interpreting for the three Polish teams, and no matter how many evening parties he had to attend to chat in order to observe and report, he had to be privy to what was happening. As of yet, I was not able to locate intelligence reports authored by him that would deal with the trial. It is likely that Harriman split the duties. The ambassador wrote:

*I decided not to attend the trial but to send Stevens to follow proceedings and took the position that in view of Stalin’s assurances to Hopkins my attendance might be interpreted as casting doubts on Soviet good faith.*⁵⁶

Where was Tonesk during the crucial week of talks? He was “in the room where it happened” translating for Harriman. “It” means the creation of a postwar temporary government for Poland. In this regard the U.S. embassy reporting indicated hope that

⁵¹ 1945 6 18 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁵² Wyrok [Judgement]. *Proces szesnastu w dokumentach*, p. 54.

⁵³ STYPUŁKOWSKI, Zbigniew. *Zaproszenie do Moskwy*. Warszawa: Editions Spotkania, 1991, p. 424–425.

⁵⁴ 1945 06 20 WAH [Harriman], Telegram to Secretary of State. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁵⁵ 1945 06 19 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁵⁶ 1945 06 18 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

the Poles who came to Moscow would swiftly reach a compromise. What the report neglected to remind was that the Poles were carefully selected in the lengthy process of negotiations (from February to June) in which the Soviets had the final word.⁵⁷

On Sunday, 17 June 1945, Harriman invited Bierut and Osóbka-Morawski for lunch, a first in the series of meetings he considered “best tactically.” “Tonesk, the Navy lieutenant who handled the interpreting, was extremely helpful in the manner in which he handled the task.”⁵⁸ This was the first mention of Tonesk participating in the talks with the Poles found in Harriman’s papers. In his calendar, Tonesk noted the meeting’s length: 1:30–4:55 p.m., so it was much more than just a chat over lunch.⁵⁹ Bierut assured the American ambassador that the Polish Communists did not seek to prosecute “those with different political views as long as they did not participate in subversive activities.” Interestingly, “subversive activities,” also referred to by Bierut as “terrorist,” were supposed to be supported by the British. Evidently, Bierut was trying to weaken the U.S.-U.K. allied position in regard to Poland.⁶⁰ In fact, the last time Special Operations Executive carried out an airdrop for the Polish underground was on 28 December 1944. During the trial, the British operatives were already in a process of closing the Polish Section at SOE.⁶¹

The trial of “the Sixteen” began on Monday, 18 June 1945. On this day Tonesk entered the room in Spiridonovka, a Moscow mansion, in which some of the “Polish commission” meetings were held. This was the ninth meeting of the Tripartite Commission, and Tonesk was listed as a member of the American government representation, after Harriman and Stevens. The reason he was in the room might be that besides the Soviet and British delegations there was also a group indicated as the Polish Provisional Government, that is, the Polish Communists (Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski, Gomułka and Kowalski).⁶² Most of the members of the other groups of Poles were already in Moscow, but they were not invited to an official meeting of the Tripartite Commission until 21 June 1945, when its 10th meeting took place.

On Tuesday, 19 June 1945, Tonesk authored a lengthy memorandum, copies of which were sent to the ambassador, Kennan, Stevens, and shared with the British. It contains his account of a cocktail party given by the British ambassador, who asked Tonesk to translate for him during a conversation with Wincenty Rzymowski (who became the minister of foreign affairs in PGNU). One remark that Tonesk indicated as “pertinent” was Rzymowski saying: “Mr. Mikołajczyk was too stiff; if he would unbend

⁵⁷ ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 281–285.

⁵⁸ 1945 06 17 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable to Dept. 2136. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 3.

⁵⁹ Tonesk’s Calendar entry for 17 June 1945. Xenia Tonesk archive.

⁶⁰ 1945 06 17 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable to Dept. 2136. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 3.

⁶¹ TEBINKA, Jacek. ZAPALEC, Anna. *Polska w brytyjskiej strategii wspierania ruchu oporu. Historia Sekcji Polskiej Kierownictwa Operacji Specjalnych (SOE)*. Warsaw: Neriton, 2022, p. 510–512.

⁶² 1945 06 18 Minutes of the Ninth Session of the Polish Commission. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

a little matters would progress more smoothly.”⁶³ The amount of pressure applied by the British on Mikołajczyk to go to Moscow had already been paramount.⁶⁴ In Moscow, Rzymowski tried to engage the Americans to “unbend” the Polish leader. Mikołajczyk came to the negotiating table hoping to become a prime minister of the PGNU.⁶⁵ He left as a second deputy prime minister and minister for agricultural reforms. He did bend, and not just a little.

The cocktail party gathered all Polish delegates, Clark Kerr, Harriman assisted by Stevens, and Vyshinsky with several members of his staff. According to Tonesk’s account, during the party Harriman spoke with Władysław Kiernik, leader of the Peasant Party, SL – the major political opposition force in Poland. Kiernik was a close associate of the SL leader, Wincenty Witos. The Soviets tried to lure Witos to Moscow in many ways. Some ideas would surely make the Pole uneasy, such as a plan to send an invitation from Molotov to be delivered to Witos by a Soviet embassy staff in Poland.⁶⁶ Eventually, the reason for Witos’ rejection of the invitation to Moscow was poor health.⁶⁷ However, in private, Witos gave another reason as well. In the course of the conversation to which Tonesk was privy, Kiernik mentioned his party leader’s (Witos’) initial response to sounding out a possibility of his coming:

Why do you want me from Kraków when you already have two very good representatives of the Peasant Party in Moscow: Mr. [Stanisław] Mierzwa and Mr. [Kazimierz] Bagiński.

Both were part of the kidnapped sixteen at that moment awaiting trial in Soviet prison. Kiernik added that there was one more Peasant Party member among the sixteen leaders in prison: Mr. [Adam] Bień.⁶⁸

The communists in Warsaw created a mock peasant party to foster confusion, concurrently harassing the original agrarian party – the SL. Kiernik, a victim of such persecution (interned for three weeks in Kraków prior to his coming to Moscow) reported to the American ambassador that he was released “just before Mr. Witos received the first invitation to the Moscow meetings about June 12.” Speaking on behalf of Witos, Harriman’s interlocutor also stated that the Peasant Party was “fully cognizant of the importance of Poland maintaining friendship and good relations with the Soviet Union,” adding that a compromise cannot be based on adding a few people to the Warsaw

⁶³ 1945 06 19 W.T. [William Tonesk], Memorandum. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁶⁴ MIKOŁAJCZYK, Stanisław. *The Rape of Poland. Pattern of Soviet Aggression*. Westport CT: Greenwood press, Publishers, 1948, p. 113–120.

⁶⁵ ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 316–318.

⁶⁶ 1945 06 15 Minutes of the Eight Session of Polish Commission, Kremlin. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 3.

⁶⁷ ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 283.

⁶⁸ 1945 06 19 W.T. [William Tonesk]. Memorandum. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

Communist government, as it was “backed by force, and does not represent the majority.” It could only be used as a core, around which the majority would be represented.⁶⁹

During this Tuesday evening party, Tonesk caught and reported casual exchanges over toasts. Given the context described above, some of his observations sound eerie. Osóbka-Morawski said to the British ambassador: “You, Sir, can further ensure the success of the conference by not giving Mr. Mikołajczyk a visa so that it will be impossible for him to return to England,” to which Kerr responded: “With all my heart I promise you that I shall do that – keep him here until success is assured.” If this was supposed to sound like a joke, it did not. Also, as Tonesk continued to report, Osóbka-Morawski disclosed the plan to have Mikołajczyk return to Poland to rally for one, united peasant party.⁷⁰ This was an endeavor the Communists unsuccessfully tried with ailing Witos (he died on 31 October 1945), and increasingly used coercion to bring about, to which Kiernik was a witness.

At this time the Communists needed Mikołajczyk badly for the sake of claiming legitimacy for the PGNU. Due to the fact that the government in London repudiated Yalta altogether, it was down to convincing Mikołajczyk to meet the provisions of Yalta and include the “Poles from abroad” among the negotiating Poles. Mikołajczyk knew he had the support of Witos and Kiernik but the pressure was tremendous. In the final words of one of his reports, Tonesk mentioned a farewell comment uttered to him by Osóbka-Morawski:

*Please be sure to tell Mr. Harriman how important it is for Mr. Mikołajczyk not to fail this time. Ask him to tell Mr. Mikołajczyk that he must not fail, because this is the last chance and he will be unable to try again if he fails now.*⁷¹

While Osóbka-Morawski loyally chaired the consecutive pseudo-governments created for Poland based on Stalin’s directives—the PKWN (1944), the Provisional Government (1945), and was now on his way to become the prime minister of the PGNU, he was also an ardent socialist leader.⁷² His remark to Tonesk can be interpreted as a signal that the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) intended to play a distinguishable role in Polish politics.⁷³ Pro-Soviet Poles were not a monolith.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ 1945 06 19 W.T. [William Tonesk]. Memorandum. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁷² ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 181–182.

⁷³ Osóbka-Morawski’s attempt to exercise relative autonomy for the socialist party came to an end in the aftermath of 19 January 1947 fraudulent elections in Poland, followed by merging of the PPS with the Polish Workers’ Party – PPR in 1948. PACZKOWSKI, Andrzej. *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN: 1998, p. 134, 159, 201.

⁷⁴ Norman Naimark investigated the political struggle within the communist party in Poland. Władysław Gomułka’s attempt to design a Polish road to socialism, despite “nationalist” dissent, still meant “he thought he was doing the right thing for the victory of socialism and the interests of the Soviet Union in

On the following day Tonesk was present at lunch, to which Harriman invited Henryk Kołodziejski and Professor Adam Krzyżanowski representing the group of arbitrarily selected representatives from Poland. Kołodziejski spoke Russian and Polish, while Krzyżanowski spoke French. Although Harriman spoke some French,⁷⁵ it was the content delivered in Polish and Russian that the ambassador found valid. Again, Tonesk's role of translator was crucial to facilitate dialog. Kołodziejski "expressed himself in favor of Polish-Soviet collaboration and friendship as a practical measure of necessity if Poland was to continue to exist." He also added: "The Polish people of all classes were incurable romanticists and had little appreciation of political realities." Mentioning key non-Communist political parties in Poland (SL, the Socialist Party (PPS), the Christian Labor Party (SP), and the National Democratic Party (ND)), he expressed the last vestige of hope: free and unfettered elections. Their outcome would not be favorable to the Communists, and they knew it. Therefore, Kołodziejski also envisioned an alternative scenario:

*If the elections took place under the supervision of a Polish NKVD, the people would boycott them and would not accept results but would continue a policy of resistance and obstruction.*⁷⁶

Based on this account, it was becoming apparent that even the delegates invited to the Moscow conference as representatives of the political milieu in Poland, acceptable to all members of the Tripartite Commission (including the Soviets), realized the impossibility of real negotiations. The compromise on PGNU was a must "if Poland was to continue to exist."⁷⁷ The real struggle for the country's future was to unravel in Poland during the elections when (and if) the people would be empowered with ballot cards.

It is important to note that faced with terror, blackmail and no room for maneuver, the non-Communist delegates who arrived in Moscow accepted an early invitation from Bierut to meet without any representatives of the Big Three powers. Their aim was to prepare a plan for the compromise that would lead to the establishment of the PGNU. Already on Sunday, 17 June 1945, Bierut invited all Poles who were present in Moscow to an ad hoc meeting held in the Polish embassy building. Such a meeting is confirmed in Harriman's talk with Kutrzeba and Żuławski (non-government politicians from Warsaw).⁷⁸ A proposal was distributed to initiate discussion. Tonesk was the one

his country." NAIMARK, Norman M. *Stalin and the Fate of Europe. The Postwar Struggle for Sovereignty*. Cambridge Mass.-London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019, p. 230.

⁷⁵ WANDYCZ, Piotr S. Harriman a Polska. *Zeszyty Historyczne*, 1987, t. 79, p. 89.

⁷⁶ 1945 06 20 Memorandum to the Ambassador, Subject: Conversation with Mr. Kolodziejski. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁷⁷ [no date] Translation. Reorganization [sic!] of Polish Provisional Government. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 2.

⁷⁸ 1945 06 18 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4; Tonesk calendar entry for 18 June 1945 confirms another long lunch with above-mentioned men 1:30-4:40, followed by the ninth commission meeting, "short".

who translated it from Polish to English.⁷⁹ As both language copies are available, it is clear that the text was translated very well. Its careful examination indicates the authors: the Warsaw Communists. Bierut and his companions likely had it preapproved by the Soviets. There is a scanty documentary record of the negotiations among the Polish groups held independently of the representatives of the Big Three. What emerges from the available pieces is a story of the nonchalance of the “Lublin Poles.” They projected the impression that the compromise was not really important for them, as they already had the power. As the talks took on a more heated form on 20 June 1945, the non-communists Poles realized that the alternative to the offered compromise was the continued limbo with continuing rule of the communist Provisional Government in Warsaw. In such case, the elections would be postponed indefinitely. Fully aware that the Polish society would not vote for the Moscow-installed regime, the non-communist Poles, under complex pressures, agreed to a detailed compromise. This deal, however, was soon forsaken by the Communists.⁸⁰ What was communicated to the members of the Tripartite Commission in Moscow was an abridged version of the agreement reduced largely to suggested names of some cabinet members. A complete list of cabinet posts was to follow once the government was set up in Warsaw.⁸¹ The text of the original deal was not made public.

The 10th meeting of the commission started on 21 June 1945, at 9:00 p.m., in the Spiridonovka. The members of the Tripartite Commission welcomed Poles representing three groups: the Polish Provisional Government (Communists: Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski, Gomułka and Kowalski), Poles from abroad (from London but not endorsed by the exiled government: Mikołajczyk, Stańczyk, Antoni Kołodziej) and Poles from within Poland (arbitrarily selected representatives of non-Communist political milieus: Kutrzeba, Krzyżanowski, Kiernik, Kołodziejski and Żuławski).⁸² This was the first meeting of the Tripartite Commission in which all the Poles invited to Moscow for consultations took part. What was at stake for the Soviets and their puppets from Warsaw was securing international recognition of the postwar government for Poland. What the non-Communists hoped for was to maintain the U.S. and U.K. interest in Poland to ensure “free and unfettered elections” – as pledged in Yalta.

This was quite a busy Thursday for Tonesk. Not only did he attend lunch with Bierut, Mikołajczyk and Osóbka-Morawski, but noted that the evening was “*bardzo trudny*”

⁷⁹ 1945 06 20 Projekt wytycznych do konsultacji, WJT, Translation: Suggested basis for consultations. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁸⁰ ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 315–330.

⁸¹ 1945 06 21. Moscow. Oświadczenie delegacji Rządu Tymczasowego RP złożone „komisji trzech” powołanej przez konferencję krymską w sprawie założeń reorganizacji rządu. *Dokumenty i materiały*. p. 485–486.

⁸² 1945 06 21 Minutes of the Tenth Session of the Polish Commission, Spiridonovka. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

[very difficult]. The meeting over cocktails concluded before 3:00 a.m.⁸³ There was a reason to relax, as it became obvious that the compromise regarding PGNU was reached. The new government to be established in Poland was clearly dominated by the Communists and their satellite parties (pro-communist socialists, a Communist-created peasant party and a pro-communist fraction of the democrats). Osóbka-Morawski who had been the prime minister of the Warsaw communist government retained his post becoming the prime minister of PGNU. His two deputies were: Gomułka (first deputy), and Mikołajczyk (second deputy). In the emerging power structure for Poland the Communists seized all key ministerial posts: public security, national defense, foreign affairs, justice, information and propaganda, while the oppositionists were in charge of agriculture, education, labor and social welfare, and public administration. To many Poles, Mikołajczyk became the scapegoat and symbol of betrayal of the Poles who remained loyal to the Polish government in London. At this time, the government-in-exile was still broadly recognized by foreign powers, including the U.K. and U.S.⁸⁴

Reporting on this development, Lt. R. P. Meiklejohn (U.S. Navy Reserve) – assistant to the ambassador – wrote: “I must in frankness report that this settlement has been reached because all the non-Lublin Poles [not affiliated with the Communist government from Warsaw] are so concerned over the present situation in Poland that they are ready to accept any compromise which gives some hope for Polish independence and freedom for the individual.” He also noted that while Molotov and “the Warsaw Poles” were in high spirits, the other Poles were seriously concerned and counted on U.S. continued interest in ensuring free elections.⁸⁵

On 21 June 1945, as the compromise related to the formation of the Polish government was sealed the sentences were announced in the trial of the Sixteen. While the sentences were relatively mild by Stalinist standards (four months to ten years in prison), three of the Polish leaders died in Soviet prisons. Some of the released from among the original Sixteen would be rearrested upon returning to Poland.⁸⁶ Soviet persecution of political opposition in Poland, and Stalin-administered terror in the

⁸³ Tonesk Calendar, Entry for 21 June 1945. Xenia Tonesk archive.

⁸⁴ Anders said neither he nor his troops could accept a new Polish government as genuine and that in his opinion the only honest and responsible Pole in any group was 80-year-old Grabski. 1945 07 03 Telegram from Secretary of State to American Embassy Moscow. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 8.

⁸⁵ 1945 06 21 RPM [Lt. R. P. Meiklejohn, USNR, Assistant to the Ambassador], Harriman to the Department of State. Paraphrase of Embassy Cable no. 2218. Repeated to London for Schoenfeld and Winant. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁸⁶ The three leaders who died in Soviet prisons were Okulicki (24 December 1946), Jankowski (13 March 1953), and Jasiukowicz (22 October 1946). Wstęp [Introduction]. *Proces szesnastu w dokumentach*, p. 11; ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 312.

country were constantly accelerating. In the meantime, Harriman was planning ahead to the upcoming Big Three conference in Potsdam.⁸⁷

The announcement related to the composition of the PGNU was delivered in Polish by Mikołajczyk on 21 June 1945. Mindful of past controversies, Harriman reported to Washington:

*In order to avoid any misunderstandings in the translation of the text of the agreement it was agreed that the Polish text would be the official text for Poles to use among themselves.*⁸⁸

Harriman proposed, and the American government agreed, that the most suitable method of announcing the formation and recognition of the Provisional Government of National Unity would be through the Polish embassy in Moscow.⁸⁹ Furthermore, during a meeting with Bierut, Harriman insisted that when the establishment of a new government is made public he should emphasize the elections. Bierut was not pledging such action.⁹⁰

The U.S. embassy staff considered the deal a success, but was also aware of how it may become a subject of criticism. Stevens included the following remark in his memorandum for Harriman:

*While the criticism may be directed against the Commission that the Poles invited for consultation were not a sufficiently broad and representative group, the charge cannot be levied that a government unacceptable to these leaders was imposed by the Commission.*⁹¹

There seems to be a logical mistake in it. The government was for the Polish people and not for the non-representative group, whose nature the U.S. understood well. It was to be imposed on the Poles and not the few people handpicked to go to Moscow. However, this was none of the U.S.'s concern, as Stevens also stated, quite frankly, the U.S. interests involved. When paraphrased it can be reduced to the following factors: to remedy a condition that constituted a threat to peace and stability in Central Europe and consequently to world peace, to remove an acute source of friction in Soviet-American relations, to ensure a genuinely free and independent Poland, to satisfy public opinion in the United States, particularly among American Poles, and to avoid the existence over

⁸⁷ 1945 06 21 Memorandum of Conversation, The Ambassador, Page, Vyshinski, Postoev, Moscow. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 4.

⁸⁸ 1945 06 23 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable to Dept. 2239. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 5.

⁸⁹ 1945 06 29 Summary of the press conference (by GFK, Kennan). Telegram 2318, Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 7.

⁹⁰ In the meeting of 27 June 1945, Harriman, Stevens and Tonesk met with Bierut, Ambassador Modzelewski and the Polish interpreter, who was a new addition. 1945 06 27 FBS [Stevens]. Memorandum of Conversation, Polish Embassy, 12:00 noon. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 6.

⁹¹ 1946 06 22 Memorandum to the Ambassador: American attitude toward new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity, Moscow. FBS [Stevens]. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 5.

a period of a generation of a large group of bitter and discontented Polish emigrants who would constitute a constant source of friction in international relations.⁹² As the next decade would make bluntly obvious, none of these aims were achieved.

Harriman's interpretation of the deal sent to Washington included a statement that was more realistic, if not cynical:

*It is my feeling that although these men [Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski and Gomułka], are Poles at heart they recognize their political strength comes from Moscow and not from the Polish people [...] They recognize the tremendous moral influence of the United States among the Poles [...] I feel they will support the development of relations with us to the fullest extent that Moscow will permit [...] it is my opinion that Mikołajczyk and his associates have been wise in accepting the best deal they could make on their own and not coming to the British Ambassador and myself for direct assistance in improving the present agreement....*⁹³

On 22 June 1945, the eleventh and final meeting of the Tripartite Commission began, again late in the evening, at 9:30 p.m. Most of the discussion focused on how to communicate the creation of the PGNU to the public. Bierut suggested that the adjective "provisional" be dropped from the name. Harriman reacted by mentioning the letter of the Yalta agreements and the pledge to hold elections before "provisional" is dropped. Molotov confronted Harriman, who requested a day to consult with Washington. The Soviets did not want to wait, so the "provisional" remained in the name.⁹⁴ Tonesk, present at this meeting, earlier in the day had attended a dinner at Harriman's to which Mikołajczyk was invited. Their conversation might have influenced American ambassador's reaction to the Soviet proposal.

On 23 June 1945, the Moscow radio announced that the compromise had been reached. On that day Tonesk had meetings with Kiernik (minister of public administration in PGNU), Gomułka (deputy prime minister in PGNU) and Stańczyk (minister of labor and social security in PGNU).⁹⁵ That day he also submitted a seven-page report on Harriman's earlier exchanges with a Polish, independent socialist (Żuławski) and professor (Kutrzeba).⁹⁶ Tonesk participated in the meeting as an interpreter. Tonesk's report included a summary of opinions collected from Stańczyk, Żuławski, Kołodziejski and Krzyżanowski. It is here that he related their positions to the trial of the Sixteen. "None of the members of the groups represented within the room have any use for Okulicki and they expressed the opinion that it is a group of reactionaries like Okulicki

⁹² 1946 06 22 Memorandum: American attitude toward the new...

⁹³ 1945 06 23 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable to Dept. 2239.

⁹⁴ 1945 06 22 Minutes of the Eleventh Session of Polish Commission. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 5.

⁹⁵ Tonesk calendar entries for 22 and 23 June 1945, Xenia Tonesk archive.

⁹⁶ 1945 06 23 Lt. Tonesk, Memorandum to the Ambassador, Conversation at luncheon given for Mr. Żuławski and Professor Kutrzeba, Moscow. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder: 5. The meeting took place on 18 June 1945.

[General Leopold Okulicki of the Home Army] and Jasiukiewicz [Stanisław Jasiukowicz] who hurt the cause of Poland.”⁹⁷ Both uncompromising and independent-minded democratic political and military leaders died in Soviet prisons before the end of 1946.

On the same day, in the evening of 23 June 1945, Stalin hosted a grand reception for the members of the new government and other Polish political leaders to which both U.S. and U.K. ambassadors were invited. The event clearly celebrated Bierut as the newly adorned leader of Poland and was covered by Soviet press.⁹⁸ Mikołajczyk recalled:

*It was a glittering affair that must have awakened the graves of bygone czars. The Russian officers on hand attended in spangled glory, the tables groaned with food, and vodka flowed like water.*⁹⁹

Tonesk who did not drink, in his calendar entry for the day noted:

*Big parade of victory with returned troops – nothing special.*¹⁰⁰

Interestingly, Harriman does not enumerate intertwined pressures the non-Communist group operated under, and does not delve into the reasons behind the non-communist Poles accepting the deal put forth by Bierut. There was no discussion of these in the forum of the Tripartite Commission. A British journalist living in Moscow and a communist-sympathizer (Ralph Parker), inspired Stevens’ report for Harriman related to the trial. The message was that the Poles who were acquitted in the trial had not been mistreated or subjected to “third-degree methods to extract confessions.”¹⁰¹ No mention was made of the kidnapping or non-release of some of the Polish leaders held in prisons since March 1945.¹⁰² As mentioned above, Harriman sent an embassy observer to the trial (Stevens) but, as the ambassador confessed, “The Polish conversations were proceeding simultaneously, the Embassy’s observer was unable to be present continuously throughout the trial.” The few witness testimonies he did hear prompted the ambassador to assume that “most of these witnesses were picked up in a police roundup and promised liberty in return for their testimony, all the implications of which could scarcely have been apparent to them.”¹⁰³ Indeed, the Soviet method of

⁹⁷ [no date] Observations of Lt. William Tonesk based on conversations conducted with Messrs. Stańczyk, Żuławski, Kołodziejski, and Professor Krzyżanowski. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 5.

⁹⁸ 1945 06 24 Joint Press Reading Service, Moscow. Press Release. Dinner given by Stalin in honor of the president of the Krajowa Rada Narodowa, the members of the provisional government of the Polish Republic and Polish political leaders in Moscow. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 5.

⁹⁹ MIKOŁAJCZYK, Stanisław. *The Rape of Poland. Pattern of Soviet Aggression*. Westport CT: Greenwood press, Publishers, 1948, p. 127.

¹⁰⁰ Tonesk calendar entries for 24 June 1945, Xenia Tonesk archive.

¹⁰¹ 1945 06 27 Memorandum to the Ambassador: Reactions of acquitted Poles, FBS [Stevens]. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 6.

¹⁰² The U.S. and U.K. governments inquired about their fate as late as 1955. ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 312.

¹⁰³ 1945 06 29 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable Harriman to Dept. 2338. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 7.

administering coercion and dressing it up as a sign of goodwill when announcing the sentences was a masterpiece.

The next logical and only step to assure any degree of freedom for Poland was to adjust the American and British focus to the elections. At the same time, trying to capitalize on the deal, the Soviets were growing impatient as to the date by which this new government for Poland would be recognized by both Western allies. Tensions were still high. Already, on 23 June 1945, interpreting Molotov's remarks, Harriman got a clue that the Russians "may resist the carrying out of the understanding reached at Yalta that our governments [U.S. and U.K.] would continue to interest themselves in developments in Poland through our respective Ambassadors in Warsaw." His conclusion was clear:

*It is our utmost importance that our Ambassador reaches Warsaw at as early a date as possible after the formation of the new government.*¹⁰⁴

The fact that it required diplomatic recognition of the Provisional Government was not questioned.

Destination: Warsaw

Bierut was eager to rush to Warsaw. He informed Harriman of his plans on Monday (25 June 1945): leaving Moscow on Wednesday and announcing the creation of the new government on Thursday (28 June 1945).¹⁰⁵ This was the same day that the Americans (Harriman, Stevens, and Tonesk) met with the Polish government (now as a united delegation): Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski, Gomułka, Mikołajczyk, Rzymowski and Polish ambassador in Moscow Zygmunt Modzelewski. The meeting was held at the Polish embassy. Among many issues discussed, including war debt, lend-lease, Polish funds frozen in U.S. banks, etc. it was the issue of opening of the U.S. embassy in Warsaw that came forth.¹⁰⁶

Already on 24 June 1945, Lane wrote to Harriman, asking him to detach Tonesk who was temporarily assigned to a military mission in Moscow. The ambassador wanted him to go to Poland to make a preliminary survey regarding accommodations and later to be assigned to the embassy in Warsaw. Lane knew Tonesk was "bilingual and familiar with various Polish dialects and for that reason was sent to Moscow to assist Ambassador Harriman."¹⁰⁷ Following up on this conversation, during discussions held at the Polish embassy in Moscow, Harriman suggested to the Poles that Tonesk, who

¹⁰⁴ 1945 06 23 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable to Dept. 2239.

¹⁰⁵ 1945 06 25 Paraphrase of Embassy Cable to Dept. 2259. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 6.

¹⁰⁶ 1945 06 25 FBS [Stevens]. Memorandum of Conversation, Polish Embassy, 12:00. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 6.

¹⁰⁷ 1945 06 25 Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation: assignment of Lt. Tonesk to Embassy in Warsaw. Admiral Tebaud, ONI, Com. English, Lt. Col. Andrew Wylie (Naval Attaché, Warsaw),

had been assigned to the embassy in Warsaw as an attaché, might precede the ambassador to Warsaw to make arrangements for his arrival. "Mr. Bierut replied that they would be glad to welcome Lieutenant Tonesk to Warsaw, particularly as they already knew him."¹⁰⁸ Harriman inquired if this was ok for the Americans to send in cars for the staff of the embassy. It was, so Tonesk equipped with an American Jeep was getting ready to go to Warsaw.

The amicable atmosphere seemingly began to take over. As emphasized by the diplomatic correspondence, Tonesk's departure was not contingent on formal recognition of the Polish PGNU by the U.S. government.¹⁰⁹ During another meeting at the Polish embassy in Moscow, the Americans were offered logistic help with moving Tonesk, together with one more officer (Donald Castleberry), the jeep, and even Red Cross supplies (60 tons) to Poland on Bierut's train. The Polish Communist leader was offering as his train was returning to Poland with no passengers.¹¹⁰ The Polish politicians were in a rush to formally establish the government in Warsaw, while the train ride took 46 hours. So, the former German imperial train, seized by the Soviets and then given to Bierut, was stuck in Moscow ready to welcome the Americans to take them to Warsaw.

On 28 June 1945, the PGNU was sworn in by Bierut (KRN). The reconstitution of an all-Polish government for Poland was met with joyful demonstrations in Poland. Kennan relayed information coming from Warsaw that 20,000 people welcomed and celebrated Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski, Gomulka, and Rola-Żymierski.¹¹¹ He neglected to mention the emotional reactions to Mikołajczyk's return. The former prime minister's return to Poland made him an instant celebrity and sole symbol of hope among the Poles wishing the country was not doomed to the communist rule.¹¹² Stalin was willing to put up with Mikołajczyk temporarily for the Soviet leader's aim at this time was to have the postwar government in Poland recognized by the U.S. and U.K.

On 29 June 1945, Stevens learned over the phone that the second secretary of the Polish embassy in Moscow had made a mistake and neglected to include in the announcement of a new government being established in Poland the word "provisional."¹¹³ Harriman wrote to the State Department that either they wait for the change in

Ambassador Lane, U.S. embassy, Poland, microfilm, 1945: 84 (5), NARA II: 830: Naval affairs, 2: personnel: Tonesk.

¹⁰⁸ 1945 06 25 FBS [Stevens]. Memorandum of Conversation, Polish Embassy, 12:00.

¹⁰⁹ 1945 06 26 RPM [Meiklejohn] Paraphrase of State Department's cable no. 1417 to Embassy Moscow. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 6.

¹¹⁰ 1945 06 27 FBS [Stevens]. Memorandum of Conversation, Polish Embassy. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 6.

¹¹¹ 1945 07 06 GFK [Kennan] to Secretary of State, no. 2430. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 8.

¹¹² ŁATYŃSKI, Marek. *Nie paść na kolana. Szkice o polskiej polityce lat powojennych*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2002, p. 339–340.

¹¹³ Listed as present at this meeting were: Stevens, Ciechanowski (second secretary, Polish embassy). 1945 06 29 FBS [Stevens]. Memorandum of Conversation, Spaso House–midnight. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 7.

the name before recognizing the Polish government or emphasize in their press release that it was provisional.¹¹⁴ When responding to the Poles, Harriman demanded that the word “provisional” be added but himself failed to use the opportunity to remind Poles of the free elections pledge.

*I have not used the words ‘free and unfettered’ in referring to elections as these are only two of the several conditions regarding the election stipulated in Crimea. I feel that these words weaken rather than strengthen the statement and if used are unnecessarily provocative.*¹¹⁵

In the meantime, Lane considered resignation from his post in Warsaw even before setting foot in the ruins of the city. He planned this as a protest against how Poland was dealt with at Yalta. Realizing that elections could be the ultimate test case of Soviet plans, instead of resigning he decided to concentrate his mission in Poland on reporting on the ballot. In case the elections were not free, he planned to accumulate enough evidence to make it into a case against Communist rule.

The dates 26–29 June 1945 remain blank in Tonesk’s calendar. On his scheduled day of departure for Poland, 2 July 1945, instead of sitting on the train he appears in the embassy files as a translator. He translated Kutrzeba’s statement on how to ensure free elections in Poland.¹¹⁶ At the time Kennan was back at the embassy, his task being to secure exit visas for Tonesk and Castleberry. In a memorandum summarizing his efforts to make use of the phone to reach any of the Soviets at the foreign office, Kennan did not hide his frustration. Every single person he tried to reach was either “not in”, or “not in Moscow.”¹¹⁷ Clearly, Tonesk’s departure was contingent on U.S. recognizing the Warsaw government.

Moreover, the assistance with shipping American Red Cross supplies to Poland promised earlier was reduced to two cargo cars to be attached to Bierut’s train.¹¹⁸ The organizers of the transport hoped that the shipment would depart on 3 July 1945. The jeep was loaded on the train on 4 July. Still, the train would not move. The reason for the delay was that Tonesk and Castleberry, tasked with organizing U.S. Embassy, had not yet received exit visas. Again, the dates coincide. The train left the station on 5 July 1945, as the U.S. and the U.K. recognized the PGNU.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ 1945 06 29 RPM [Meiklejohn] Paraphrase of State Department’s Cable to Embassy in Moscow. For Harriman from Grew acting. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 7.

¹¹⁵ 1945 06 29 FBS [Stevens]. Memorandum of Conversation, Spaso House – midnight.

¹¹⁶ 1945 07 02 [WT-translated], The Question of Insuring Free Elections (a brief statement for Mr. W. A. Harriman from Prof. Kutrzeba). Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 8.

¹¹⁷ 1945 07 02 Memorandum to Mr. Ambassador from Mr. Kennan, Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 8.

¹¹⁸ 1945 07 02 Elliott M. Shirk, Director, American Red Cross in the USSR. Memorandum to Ambassador Harriman. Harriman Papers, box 180, folder 8.

¹¹⁹ Tonesk calendar is blank for 8–28 July. Tonesk recorded his trip in his pocket calendar: “5 July 1945: left Moscow at 15:05 via Borodino, Wyagnara in 6 car train of President Bierut. 6 July 1945: en route: Mińsk, Niegorełoje, Stołpce, Baranowicze, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Warsaw. 7 July 1945: 12:30 return to Praga. At

The table below summarizes the process leading to this moment. It indicates the temporal overlaps to show how the negotiations were orchestrated by the Moscow hosts of the Tripartite Commission. Tonesk's changing role indicative of the American policy toward Polish government is signaled in the last column.

Table 1
Chronological sequence of events leading to the creation of the PGNU, February to July 1945

“Big Three” framework for establishing the PGNU	Non-Communist Poles from Po- land	Non-Communist Poles from London	“Lublin Poles”	U.S. Embassy in Moscow William J. Tonesk
4–11 February 1945 Yalta conference		13 February 1945 – gov’t in exile rejects Yalta in toto	14–20 February 1945 Lubin Poles meet Stalin in Moscow (Soviets consider them a Provisional Government)	Tonesk assigned to Arthur Bliss Lane’s staff (ambassador to Polish gov’t in London)
23 February 1945 1 st meeting of the Tripartite Commission				21 February 1945 Tonesk ordered to go to Moscow
	28 March 1945 Soviets kidnap independent Poles (from Poland) invited for talks			8 March 1945 Tonesk arrives in Moscow
12 April 1945 Franklin D. Roosevelt dies			19–26 April 1945 Lublin Poles visit Moscow, sign a friendship treaty	
8 May 1945 end of WWII in Europe	5 May 1945 TASS announces the 16 leaders are in prison	12 June 1945 PSL: Mikołajczyk (U.K.-dissenter) accepts invite (POL: House arrests)	13 June 1945 Lublin Poles arrive in Moscow	26 May–6 June 1945 Harry Hopkins’ visit, 6 meetings with Stalin 9 June 1945 Kennan’s trip to Siberia begins

approximately 14:00 registered Hotel Polonia, 17:30, great reception in front. Room 306, Castleberry, 5th floor.”

	15 June 1945 beginning of trial announced	16 June 1945 opposition Poles arrive from UK		
	18 June 1945 trial begin		18 June 1945 first meeting of the Tripartite commission and the Lublin Poles	18–21 June 1945 Informal meetings – Tonesk translates, reports
21 June 1945 compromise on govern- ment announ- ced	21 June 1945 trial end, senten- ces announced			
28 June 1945 PGNU sworn in (Warsaw)		25 June 1945 Polish govern- ment in Lon- don protests	27 June 1945 Lublin Poles de- part Moscow (by Russian transport planes)	2 July 1945 Tonesk scheduled to de- part for Warsaw – does not leave, no exit visa
5 July 1945 U.S. and UK recognize the PGNU				5 July 1945 Tonesk departs from Moscow to prepare Embassy in Warsaw
17 July 1945 Conference in Potsdam begins	October 1946– March 1953 Death of 3 political leaders in Soviet prison. 5 re-arrested in Poland.	27 June 1945 Mikołajczyk arrived to Warsaw	27 June 1945, Warsaw, crowd celebration of PGNU's arrival from Moscow	31 July 1945 Bliss Lane arrives in Warsaw

Conclusion

Lieutenant Tonesk “had come to Warsaw from Moscow, with a jeep lent by Ambassador Harriman” – reads Lane’s account of the circumstances surrounding the reopening of the U.S. embassy in Warsaw.¹²⁰ Indeed, on 5 July 1945, Tonesk and the jeep left

¹²⁰ Arthur Bliss Lane (United States Ambassador to Poland, 1944–1947) arrived to Warsaw on 31 July 1945. BLISS LANE, Arthur. *I Saw Poland Betrayed. An American Ambassador Reports to the American People*. Indianapolis-New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948, p. 18–19.

Moscow for Warsaw by train. The travel by a relatively small, six-car train was made possible by an invitation extended to the American officer by Bierut – a Soviet-trained communist in charge of assuring Moscow's domination of postwar Poland. None of this was a coincidence. Tonesk left Moscow the very same day the U.S. and U.K. recognized the Provisional Government of National Unity for Poland, a result of four months of negotiations to which the officer was privy.

Tonesk's departure from Moscow on 5 July 1945 and his transport to Warsaw provided by Bierut symbolically represent complete Soviet control of the situation surrounding the establishment of the postwar government for Poland. The circumstances surrounding his departure could be described as grotesque if it wasn't for a fact that they bluntly represented the complete control of the Polish government creation process by the Soviets. The series of events affecting the Polish situation since February 1945, including the sudden change in the White House, the slate of advisers inherited by Harry S. Truman, including Harry Hopkins' visit to Moscow, provided conditions in which a dramatic change of the course of talks by the Americans was not feasible. Yet, it also shows how the Soviet hosts created conditions, arranged schedules, used fear interchangeably with supposed leniency to achieve the strategic goal of theirs: western recognition of a government for Poland of their making. At this point, Harriman's job was to see Yalta provisions implemented and move on. This steady framework was further reinforced by the Big Three conference in Potsdam from 17 July to 2 August 1945. The representatives of the PGNU were invited but had no agency to effectuate any change. Crucially, Yalta and Potsdam gave no instruments to the American and British ambassadors to ensure a free ballot.¹²¹

Revisiting two summer weeks in 1945, from the perspective of an American officer in Moscow who was empathetic to the fate of Poland, confirms a picture emerging from the macro-level analysis of American diplomatic papers: Poland's fate was sealed. Tonesk's reporting reproduces the nuances, tensions, and complexities involved. On the part of the Americans, it was not naïveté. It was not ill-will either. This microhistorical case study shows that while postwar government for Poland was a problem to the Americans, there was deep interest, effort, and quite realistic analysis of the true nature of the PGNU. Selection of Tonesk to assist Harriman in Moscow was a premediated effort to have a trusted translator, but also a source of information. This attests to the attention given to the issue. Tonesk spoke the languages and had the knowledge, experience and networks that provided for his in-depth and nuanced reporting. While the British were relying on their reports coming from Poland (and sharing some with

¹²¹ 1945 08 02 Section IX: Poland, Report on the Tripartite Conference of Berlin. Communiqué no. 1384, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945*, Vol. II, p. 1508–1509, accessed 2024 10 24. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv02/d1384>

the Americans),¹²² the U.S. embassy team built their knowledge about the situation in Poland largely on conversations with the Polish visitors. Tonesk's role – both as an interpreter from Polish and the author of the memorandums – was essential. Tonesk's account shows diplomats' impatience for an agreement and joint pressure on the three groups of Poles to reach a compromise in order to move to the next phase – elections.

Within half a year after returning from his Siberian dream trip to Moscow, George F. Kennan was ready to prepare a detailed analysis on the sources of “post-war Soviet outlook.”¹²³ Sent to Washington D.C. as a telegram on 22 February 1946 it marked a sad anniversary of the beginning of the work of the Tripartite Commission. As the elections were still not even scheduled, it was becoming apparent that the commission failed to assure a proper framework for the implementation of the Yalta decisions. Stalin had already achieved his objectives. When the voting finally came, on 19 January 1947, it was marked by coercion and fraud.¹²⁴ Lane resigned in protest but neither the Americans nor the British withdrew diplomatic recognition of the Warsaw regime. As the “Long Telegram” became the ideological foundation for the development of the Truman Doctrine announced on 12 March 1947, the remaining democratically-oriented political leaders in Poland were about to be persecuted or forced into exile. Within the larger scope of American security interests, Poland remained a function of a relationship with Russia.

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¹²³ 1946 02 22 [George F.] Kennan (Moscow) to the Secretary of State, Telegram, National Security Archive, accessed 2024 10 24. <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/21042-long-telegram-original>

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Traukinys iš Maskvos: kelias į JAV ambasados atidarymą Varšuvoje 1945 metų liepą–rugpjūtį

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje išsamiai apžvelgiamos 1945 m. birželį Maskvoje vykusios derybos dėl Lenkijos vyriausybės sudarymo. Remiantis Jaltos konferencijos nutarimais, derybos buvo priskirtos trišalei komisijai, susidedančiai iš JAV, Didžiosios Britanijos ir Sovietų Sąjungos atstovų. Šis tyrimas remiasi amerikiečių šaltiniais, nušviečiančiais, kaip JAV ambasada dirbo su Lenkijos

delegatais. Analizė atliekama laiko ir tarpasmeninių santykių rėmuose. Pagrindinis šios istorijos veikėjas yra lenkų kilmės vertėjas ir JAV žvalgybos pareigūnas Williamas J. Toneskas.

Taikomas mikroistorijos metodas padeda atskleisti įvykių aplinkybes ir dinamiką, atveria JAV žvalgybos ataskaitas ir tokiu būdu pagilina istoriografinės žinias apie JAV poziciją po Antrojo pasaulinio karo. Ši analizė yra sutelkta į vienalaikius įvykius, atskleidžiančius, kaip derybas organizavo trišalės komisijos šeimininkai Maskvoje. Tai parodo, kaip sovietų atstovai kūrė sąlygas, dėlėjo derybų tvarkaraščius, naudojo baimę pakaitomis su tariamu atlaidumu, kad pasiektų savo strateginį tikslą – Vakarų pripažintą ir sovietų įtakoje esančią Lenkijos vyriausybę. Dvi 1945 m. vasaros savaitės iš amerikiečių karininko Maskvoje perspektyvos leidžia matyti, kad nors pokario vyriausybė Lenkijoje tapo problema amerikiečiams, jie itin domėjosi, stengėsi ir gana realistiškai analizavo besikuriančios Lenkijos nacionalinės vienybės vyriausybės prigimtį. Tonesko pasakojimas rodo diplomatų susierzinimą dėl ilgo proceso ir bendrą trijų lenkų grupių bauginimą, kad būtų greičiau pasiektas kompromisas ir pereita į kitą etapą – „laisvus ir nevaržomus rinkimus“. Toliau straipsnyje aiškinamasi lenkų motyvacija pasiduoti prievartinei sąjungai su komunistais turint identišką planą – konfrontaciją perkelti prie balsavimo dėžių Lenkijoje. Aplinkybės, susijusios su Tonesko išvykimu iš Maskvos su užduotimi paruošti patalpas JAV ambasados Varšuvoje atidarymui, yra simbolinė ir groteskiška išvada, rodanti vilčių dėl laisvos ir demokratinės Lenkijos beprasmiškumą.

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