Telegram from “Tolstoy”[[1]](#footnote-1) to the Foreign Office following from Secretary of State for Sir O. Sargent, 12 October 1944

IMMEDIATE

[1]. In conversation after dinner at the Embassy last night Marshal Stalin was at great pains to assure the Prime Minister that failure to relieve Warsaw had not been due to any lack of effort by the Red Army. The failure was due entirely to the enemy’s strength and difficulties of terrain[[2]](#footnote-2). Marshal Stalin could not admit this failure before the world. Exactly the same situation had arisen at Kiev which in the end was only liberated by outflanking movement. The Prime Minister accepted his view absolutely and he assured Marshal Stalin that no serious persons in the United Kingdom had credited reports that the failure had been deliberate. Criticism had only referred to the apparent unwillingness of the Soviet Government to send aeroplanes. Mr. Harriman who was present said that the same was true of the people of America.

2. The Prime Minister and I then sought to impress on Marshal Stalin how essential it was in the interest of Anglo-Soviet relations that the Polish question should now be settled on a basis which would seem reasonable to the British people. The Prime Minister emphasised how he had entered the war for the sake of Poland although we had no sordid or material interest in that country. The British people would not understand that she should be let down. The London Poles and Lublin Poles must now be told that they must agree together. If they refused or were unable to agree then the British and Soviet Governments, the two great Allies, must themselves impose a reasonable settlement.

3. Later in the evening I had a long conversation with M. Molotov on the same subject. Mr. Harriman also took part. M. Molotov spoke well of Mikolajaczyk but said that on his previous visit he had given the impression of being willing but weak. I said this time we must ensure that he did not return to London but that he should form a new Government here on the basis of his proposals and should proceed to Lublin. M. Molotov said that he regretted M. Mikolajaczyk’s departure last time. If he had said no they would have been sorry but they would have understood. If he had said yes they would have been very glad. He said neither no or yes but simply disappeared. They could not stop him going. M. Molotov spoke of 1935 constitution[[3]](#footnote-3) as a symbol of Fascist past which only aroused memories of Marshal Pilsudski and Colonel Beck. I maintained that the constitutional issue was now only of the second interest since our aim should be fusion of the two parties with the view to election in Warsaw for a new constituent assembly. M. Molotov complained General Anders[[4]](#footnote-4) was spreading anti-Soviet propaganda among his troops in Italy. I said I had seen no reports to add colour to this. M. Molotov agreed with me, however, in my estimation of Romer’s helpful role and I did all I could to increase his confidence in the latter.

[TNA, CAB 120/164]

Key words: Poland

1. “Tolstoy” – Codename for the conference held in Moscow, 9 – 19 October 1944. between the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill and Foreign Secretary A. Eden, and Marshal Stali, and V. Molotov, with the US Ambassador to Moscow, A Harriman, as observer. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Previously, Stalin had already voiced the idea at a meeting with Kerr and Harriman on 23 September 1944, and later repeated it during a conversation with representatives of Armia Ludowa on 15 November. See: SАNO. T. 2. S. 174–175; Sovetskiy faktor v Vostochnoy Evrope. T. 1. p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This was adopted in January 1935 and entered into force in April 1935 (known as the "April Constitution"). It transferred all power to the president, finally determining the political system of the so-called rehabilitation regime created as a result of Pilsudski’s coup d’état in 1926. During the negotiations between PCNL representatives and Mikołajczyk in August 1944, in Moscow the question of which constitution (the 1935 or 1921) to adopt became one of the major points of contention that could not be overcome (See: Sovetskiy faktor v Vostochnoy Evrope. T. 1. p. 76–83). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Anders, Władysław Albert (1892 – 1970) – Polish Lieutenant-General, Commander of the Polish forces formed in the territory of USSR (so-called Anders’ Army; 1941 – 1942), Commander of Polish II Corps (1943 – 1945) fought in Italy. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)