Note from Prime Minister W. Churchill to Deputy Prime Minister C. Attlee describing the conditions attached to British recognition of an independent Poland, dated 8 February 1945

POLAND

1. Polish Government
2. We cannot recognize the Lublin Government. But failure to get a solution would gravely disturb public opinion in Britain and America and would prejudice the future.
3. The time has passed for the fusion of the London and Lublin Governments.
4. The only hope is the creation of a new interim Government in Poland pledged to hold free elections as soon as conditions permit.
5. There are no good candidates from the London Government, but if Mikolajczyk and perhaps Romer[[1]](#footnote-1) and others such as Grabski[[2]](#footnote-2) could be included it would be much easier for us to recognize the new Government.
6. If it would help, we would be ready to see Mikolajcyzk’s idea adopted of a Presidential Council consisting of, say, M. Witos[[3]](#footnote-3), Archbishop Sapieha[[4]](#footnote-4), M. Zurlawski[[5]](#footnote-5) and M. Bierut[[6]](#footnote-6), which Council would appoint the new Government[[7]](#footnote-7).
7. POLISH BOUNDARIES
8. Eastern Frontier: we have agreed publicly to the Curzon Line[[8]](#footnote-8) giving Lwow to the USSR.
9. Western Frontier: we and the Americans agreed to give Poland East Prussia south and west of Konigsberg, Danzig, the eastern tip of Pomerania and the whole of Upper Silesia.
10. These cessions would involve a transfer of some 2½ million Germans.
11. The Oder frontier without Breslau and Stettin would involve another 2½ million. It is true that last October we were prepared to let Mikolajczyk’s Government have any territory they claimed up to the Oder but this was conditional on agreement being reached between him and the Russians.
12. The Lublin Government are now claiming not only the Oder frontier including Stettin and Breslau but also the western Neisse. This means an additional 3¼ millions, making 8 in all[[9]](#footnote-9).
13. Our policy should be to keep the position fluid as regards the Oder line, which would severely tax the Polish capacity for absorption and increase the transfer difficulty.

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Keywords: Poland

1. Romer, Tadeusz (1894 - 1978) - Polish diplomat and politician. Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Polish government in exile (1943 -1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Grabski, Stanislaw (1871 - 1949) - Polish economist and politician. Before the Second World War, Grabski was an economics professor. He was arrested and imprisoned by Soviet forces following the invasion of Poland in 1939. Later released, he joined the Polish government in exile. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Witos, Wincenty (1874 – 1945) – Polish statesman and politician, former Prime Minister (1920 – 1921, 1923, 1926); during the war he was in a German prison (1940 – 1945); after liberation he was Vice-President of the Krajowa Rada Narodowa (1945). Witos’s name had already surfaced earlier (as a potential member of the Polish Government that would be recognized by the USSR) in conversations between Stalin and Polish and Czechoslovak representatives. (Noskova A.F. Stalin i Polꞌsha. S. 129; Peregovory E. Benesha v Moskve (dekabrꞌ 1943 g.). S. 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sapieha, Adam Stefan (1867 – 1951) – Archbishop of Kraków (1926 – 1951). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Żuławski, Zygmunt (1880 – 1949) – Polish statesman, former Sejm deputy, one of the wartime leaders of the clandestine organisation of Polish socialists (PPS-WRN) operating in Poland, a deputy of the Krajowa Rada Narodowa (1946 – 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bierut, Bolesław (1892 - 1956) - Polish politician. A prominent Polish communist during the Second World War. President of the Republic of Poland (1947 - 1952), Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Poland (1952 - 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Later, at the time of the Yalta Conference, Churchill sent Stalin a message (on 6 February 1945) offering to invite Polish representatives from Warsaw and London to Yalta; all three aforementioned leaders were included in this number. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The reference is to Churchill’s speech to the House of Commons on 22 February 1944 (Hansard. Parliamentary Debates. 5th Series. Vol. 397. Col. 663 – 701). See also the Gusev’s telegram of 22 February. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Analogous figures were produced by Eden earlier, in his Cabinet report ‘Poland’s Western Frontier’ (distributed on 23 January 1945). Eden tried to emphasize the complexity of moving such a large number of people (he wrote of ‘a serious risk of complete breakdown of all transfer arrangements’) and to show the excessive nature of the demands of the Polish Provisional Government (a border running along the Oder and the western Neisse). See: W.P. (45) 48, Memo by Eden, 23/01/1945 // TNA, CAB 66/61. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)