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MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. Krock
FROM: J. Catledge

Here are some random notes on my conversations with certain people in Washington regarding the recent Three-Power Conference at Yalta. My main contact was former Justice James F. Byrnes, who attended the conference as an assistant to President Roosevelt and who, sensing the importance of the occasion and yielding to a lifetime personal habit, made shorthand notes of everything he witnessed. What he told me was, of course, in the strictest of confidence so far as he is concerned, but he knew I would pass the essential parts of the information along to my associates on The New York Times. The statements of facts, conclusions and impressions which follow are primarily his:

Military plans laid and discussed at Yalta look to the end of the war in Europe no later than July 1, 1945. The conferees reached the unanimous conclusion that the time had come for much closer coordination of the military forces of the "Big Three" powers in Europe, and made certain proposals for combined staff decisions and joint operations which are soon to be put into effect.

The enormous raids by American and British aircraft on targets on the Russo-German front were put on deliberately as an example of what could be done. There was unanimous agreement as to the general lines of military operations, but there was a mite of fear that the success in carrying it out might be delayed somewhat by another possible development, namely, a declaration of war on Russia by Japan.

JAPAN

Stalin left no doubt that Russia will declare war on Japan shortly after VE-Day. He disclosed that the logistics were being planned for Russia entering the war against Japan within 90 days after the collapse of Germany. He expressed a feeling that too much is being said in the United States and Great Britain about this proposal and that Japan might, therefore, be provoked into jumping the gun and declaring war on Russia before the capitulation of Germany, which might necessitate transfer of twenty divisions or more from the Eastern German front to the Asiatic zone. He asked the President and Mr. Churchill if there were not some steps they could take to prevent American and British newspapers and radio commentators speculating on the likelihood of Russian-Japanese war. Information at the conference indicated that the Japanese are becoming aware of Russia's general hostility towards them--an awareness that is being fanned by the Germans who are insisting that the Japs help get Russia off Germany's back. Stalin's intentions about Japan were not

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always stated in definite terms when the question was brought up. He referred first to the logistics of the case and of preparation being made to transfer Russian troops to Asia after VE-Day. He referred next to the diplomatic reports on Germany and Japan. He re-emphasized time and again the possibility of Japan striking first, but at one of the last luncheons, at the end of the conference, the Marshall raised his glass and said: "I propose a toast to the speedy and absolute defeat of our enemies, the Nazis and the Japanese". (He used the term "Nazis" not "Germans".)

POLAND

The question of Poland occupied more attention than any other at the conference. Mr. Roosevelt, knowing that he was to act as chairman of the group, sketched out an agenda. The first day they sat down to the table, each found a copy of the agenda at his place. The first 6 and 7 items were non-controversial subjects, but numbers 8 and 9 (as my informant remembers them) were "Poland" and "German Settlements". Stalin looked up at Roosevelt and said in effect: "Mr. President, why do we waste time? We know that the main subjects are numbers 8 and 9. Why don't we get to them?" And so, the question of Poland was immediately before the conference.

At their meeting at Malta, Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill sought to do considerable preliminary work on the Polish question, at least to have something to present to Stalin on certain phases of it. They sketched out a jigsaw line for the Eastern boundary of Poland, one that would zig to put Lvov into Poland and sag to assign to Polish control certain oil fields to the south. As soon as the question was brought up at Yalta, Mr. Churchill presented the Churchill-Roosevelt ideas for the new Polish boundaries. Stalin took a quick glance at it, then looked up at the two with a glint in his eye, as if to suggest that he knew they had been skinning a cow. He pulled from his papers his own map showing the Curzon line with the variations as they were finally determined. Then he gave a short speech, something as follows:

"Gentlemen, don't mistake me and don't mistake the Soviet Union. We don't want a weak Poland. We want the strongest Poland possible, but we want a Poland that will respect the rights and security interests of Russia. Twice during our lifetime Germany has invaded Russia through Poland, and there is one thing I intend to contribute to the welfare of the Soviet Union, if nothing else, and that is to see that Germany does not surprise us again.

"I do not insist that the western boundary of Poland should stop at the Oder" (he then sketched a new western boundary, which he said would cover more than 9,000,000 new people into Poland from Germany). "You will notice that my proposal follows largely the Curzon line. The Curzon line is not a Russian invention. It was proposed after very exhausted studies of the many factors involved in the Polish situation following the last war. Russia did not propose it. In fact, a Russian by the name of Lenin opposed it at the time. One of the principal authors of that line, I seem to remember, was a Frenchman. I believe his name was Clemenceau. There was also an Englishman. I believe his name was Lord Curzon. Now, gentlemen, I can overcome Mr. Lenin's objections, but surely you would not want me to be less Russian than Lord Curzon or Clemenceau.

After this little speech there wasn't much question as to who was going to have his way in establishing the Polish line. He reminded them that it was not the Polish army nor the British army nor any other than the Russian army that liberated Poland. He observed that Russian soldiers were in charge of the country even today. He was perfectly willing to agree to the proposal for an election as raised by Roosevelt, but added facetiously that under the circumstances of Poland's occupation, he didn't have much doubt as to the election's outcome. Then, seriously, he stated that he believed that in time the Poles would vote in a free election to continue the arrangement which he had in mind.

It looked for a while that Stalin would have his way also about the Lublin Government. He opened the discussion of this phase with a proposal that the Lublin Government be "expanded". Roosevelt and Churchill sparred around for a while, countering with the suggestion that the Lublin and London Polish Governments be merged. Stalin grunted. Then they fished around for the exact word to use. Stalin stated a willingness to have the Lublin committed take in some of the members of the London Government, but wanted the latter to know that they were being incorporated, not that they were doing the incorporating. He demanded that Stanislaw Mikolajczyk not be included in the revised government. Finally, after much pulling and holding, the three agreed on the phraseology as carried in the Polish communique.

GERMAN SETTLEMENT

General plans for handling of Germany after the war, such as military occupation and policing, disposition of industries, assessing and collecting reparation, etc., were laid at Yalta with the major exception that no decision was taken on the Russian plan for transfer of "labor in kind". This is Stalin's plan to send millions of workers from Germany into Russia or any other allied countries that want them, to repair war damage caused by Germany. This subject was a hot one that neither Roosevelt nor Churchill wanted to touch. So they avoided it--going away considerably worried.

Other major proposals dealing with Germany were drawn in major outlines, and many of the details fixed. The original idea was that Germany should be divided into three parts, each to be administered one of the Big Three. There was originally an additional, and somewhat vague, proposal that France should have a part in handling the Rhineland. This proposal, as it was first suggested almost a year ago, provided that the occupational representatives of the United States, Great Britain and the USSR should each report directly to his own government. It seems that was Stalin's idea at the time. He was very much in favor this time, however, of a joint policy committee to sit in Brandenburg Province, whose function would be to set policy for the conduct of the occupation. This essential body would also have the initial job of determining the amount and kinds of reparations which Germany must pay, the disposition of her industries, the relocation of her people, and all such things. The conferees readily concluded that inasmuch as problems of this character would often be country-wide, they had better have a country-wide top policy commission. Members of this commission are to be named very soon. Mr. Roosevelt knows that the U.S. membership on this commission is going to be a terribly thankless job for someone. He is already considering the possibility of naming someone who has a ready-made backlog of popularity in the United States--someone, for instance, like General Eisenhower. The occupation of

Germany was considered by the "Big Three" as a military matter, with Stalin holding that it would remain so for many years.

DUMBARTON OAKS, de GAULLE, ETC.

It seems that Stalin carried the ball most of the time. The prime consideration in most questions seemed to be what Stalin proposed to do. As soon as he had made it plain that he intended to go into war with Japan and that henceforth he favored closer military cooperation among the Big Three in the European theatre, he had everyone eating out of his hand. Throughout the discussion, however, Stalin insisted that the answers to all major problems must lay eventually, if not immediately, with the Big Three. He was not enthusiastic about a broad international peace preserving organization such as outlined at Dumbarton Oaks. He treated Dumbarton Oaks, as well as the forthcoming San Francisco Conference, as largely "window dressing". He said in effect, if not literally, that peace will be restored in the world by the "three of us", and that it would be kept only so long as the "three of us" act together to keep it. He deferred in matters of this kind, however, to Roosevelt. "Mr. President," he would say, "if you want it that way, of course I agree." But he kept coming back to the proposal that the winning of the war and keeping of the peace are, in his mind, the job of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. He referred repeatedly to decisions which would have to be made and said laughingly, "Must we leave these decisions to Albania and Ecuador?" He foresaw that the Big Three must dominate the world for purposes of peace-keeping for many years to come, and he spoke of a security organization such as proposed at Dumbarton Oaks as an "Ideal" which might not have practical effect for twenty-five years. He repeatedly admonished the president and Mr. Churchill to be realistic about things.

It seems clear, furthermore, that in line with this thinking, Stalin was the person mainly responsible for de Gaulle's omission from the conference. He said he didn't see why the decisions of the Big Three should be complicated by anything that France or "Albania" had to say. He remarked, rather brutally that France was powerless, that if it wasn't for the presence of the allied armies in France, the Germans would be back in Paris in a few days. It was in connection with the de Gaulle matter that he said again "Let's be realistic". It seems that the President and Churchill had suggested that de Gaulle might sit in, on at least some of the conferences. It is highly likely that Harry Hopkins so told the de Gaulle people when he was in Paris on his way to Yalta. When the matter was put to Stalin, however, he said he didn't see any need of jeopardizing or complicating the decisions of the conference by inviting de Gaulle. He made it evident that he didn't think much of de Gaulle, nor was he very much impressed with France's various claims for attention. When he made this attitude known, the President didn't fight very hard for de Gaulle. As a matter of fact, the President seemed relieved when Churchill likewise did not insist on the Frenchman being invited.

Stalin was very fulsome and frequent in his praise of America's part in the war. Time and again when proposing a toast, he would make a remark something like this:

"If it were not for you and your great America, Mr. President, none of us would be here today".

This became a little annoying toward the end to Mr. Churchill and the President, sensing this, responded a couple of times with tributes to England, at which Stalin scooted around the table and clicked glasses with the Prime Minister. Joe was the life of the party.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

The understanding at the Yalta Big Three meeting was that the forthcoming more general conference in San Francisco would deal wholly with the matter of international organization for the prevention of "future" wars. None of the plans or specifications for ending the present war or settling the issues growing immediately therefrom are to be subject to any official discussion or action at San Francisco. It was the thought that World War II and all of the major questions which its waging and its ending may bring, stand apart and are the primary problem of the Big Three, and such other powers as they may bring into their discussions later--such, perhaps, as France and one or two others. Stalin was adamant on this point, and Roosevelt and Churchill agreed in substance. It is probable, therefore, that when official invitations are issued for the San Francisco meeting, they will be explicit on the subjects, or at least the general area, to be covered there.

My informant expressed some amusement at Senator Vandenberg's dilemma, because the Michigan senator is evidently worried about the Big Three decisions on Poland. These, I was told, will not be subject to any official action one way or the other at San Francisco, because they have been made and their enforcement is to start immediately. The same goes for post-victory settlements in Germany and other matters growing directly out of this war. Senator Vandenberg's proposal for keeping Germany and Japan in check will not, under this understanding, be a proper subject for "official" consideration at the San Francisco sessions.

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