
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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1944 June 7

**Toast of the President to Prime Minister
Mikolajczyk of Poland**

1520

TOAST OF THE PRESIDENT

At The State Dinner For The

Prime Minister of Poland, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk

At The White House, June 7, 1944

(And The Letter's Reply)

I want to say how happy all of us are to welcome again to Washington the Prime Minister of Poland. I think he has arrived here at a very good time, because we have been able to have, even in the one hour this morning, a very frank talk about the future of Poland. Within his lifetime and mine we have seen the rebirth. In my boyhood and his, there was no independent Poland.

After he left me this morning, I had brought to me a series of sixteen maps, showing the map of Poland beginning in 1653. And it is rather an amazing fact that during these intervening years those sixteen maps show, first and last, that practically all of Central Europe was a part of Poland -- first and last.

Therefore, it is rather difficult to untangle the map of the Poland which very soon we hope is going to have its own government back. We hope the events of the past few days will result in the liberation of an independent Poland, with its own government and its own democracy.

And yet we can't go by history, because if we were to take one nation that I have in mind, Poland would include most of Russia, and a good part of Germany, and Czechoslovakie. We are not up to that time yet. We can't talk about it even.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

I want to say how happy all of us are to welcome again to Washington the Prime Minister of Poland. I think we have arrived here at a very good time, because we have been able to have, even in the one hour this morning, a very frank talk about the future of Poland. I think his lifetime and mine we have seen the future. In my opinion and mine, there was no independent Poland.

After he left us this morning, I had brought to me a series of sixteen maps, showing the map of Poland beginning in 1922. And it is rather an amazing fact that during these intervening years these sixteen maps show, first and last, that practically all of Central Europe was a part of Poland -- that and that.

Therefore, it is rather difficult to understand the map of the Poland which very soon we hope to have the new Government back. We hope the events of the past few days will result in the liberation of an independent Poland, with its own government and its own democracy.

And yet we can't go to the heart of the matter, because if we go to take one nation what I have in mind, Poland would include most of Russia, and a good part of Germany, and Czechoslovakia. So we have to be clear about it every.

We have got to do the practical thing. And that is what the Prime Minister and I have been talking about: the practical restoration of Poland as a country which will be not merely self-governing but self-maintaining, not merely with its own democracy, but also the wherewithal to make both ends meet in food and the cost of living. I think we are as one on it. I think we have a meeting of the minds as to the principles and the desires of the future for the people of Poland.

And I hope some time very soon that steps will be taken, by which the people of Poland and the very large nation that lies to the east will become not merely good neighbors -- that is an essential -- but also two nations, one very, very large and the other a good deal smaller, that will be able to work out a mutual economic system by which there will be complete independence on the part of Poland.

At Teheran, I was very glad to have Marshal Stalin say, not once but several times, that he did not desire Poland to be an appendage of the Russian Soviet Republics but should, on the other hand, be a completely self-governing, large and completely independent nation.

Therefore, with that thought on the part of Marshal Stalin, I formed the conviction that sitting around the table and talking it over would do nobody any harm, that there can be a meeting of the minds, leaving out the smaller details, such as certain portions of what we call boundaries -- deferring them until a somewhat later time, when this new disease in Europe will be eradicated by the march of time.

I think of shell-shock. Three thousand miles away a good many people in the United States have got shell-shock at the present time. If we were close to the actual fighting, or if there were German troops in our midst, I am inclined to think that our shell-shock would be a great deal worse. And so some things must await the return of a word, which I never liked and which a former President used: normalcy, when we can think rather more quietly, and think in the longer terms of what is going to happen, not next year or the year after, or even ten years hence, but fifty years and a hundred years hence.

We go back in our relations with Poland to well over 150 years in our struggle for independence. We were very greatly helped by leading Poles -- who came over to help us from a sense of justice, from a sense of trying to help people who were trying to get self-expression -- the great Polish heroes who helped us in our first revolution. Through all the years we have watched a changing history, changing boundaries, changing designs.

I was saying to the Prime Minister that I go back to the last century, when I traveled over a large part of Europe on a bicycle, without a passport. I never carried a passport.

And I came to a barrier across the road, and a man came out, yawning, and wanted to know where I came from and where I was going.

I told him I was an American; and he said, after a few minutes of a few, very simple questions, "Have you got enough money to live on?"

I said, "Yes. I have ten pounds on the handlebars of my bicycle."

Thereupon, he waved me through the barrier, and said, "Hope you have a good time."

There was a good deal of inter-marriage, interchanging of ideas and friendship between the nations of Europe then. Yet in the last fifty years that has all gone. It is a very sad thing about Europe, that that spirit has gone. It has become so nationalistic.

And yet we know there is the very great, one of the larger European nations -- Poland. It is right that they should continue to have their complete independence, and integrity, and the right spirit, because the spirit counts more than almost anything else.

And so the Prime Minister and I have been talking today -- and talk again tomorrow -- something about the spirit of the future of Europe, getting away from the mere questions of whether this town will be on this side of the line or that side of the line. There is a bigger thing than that -- and I am sure the Prime Minister agrees with me -- it is not just a question of class or of land ownership, it is a question of the population of Poland.

The Prime Minister has always worked, all his life, for the health of the people at the "bottom of the heap." There is a great deal to do for them, still more in the future than in the past. And yet we in this country recognize the value of the Polish population, the thing that goes back to hundreds of years,

the integrity of it, the good citizenship of it, the fact that they are not Poles in this country any more, they are Americans -- Americans of Polish descent. That is why they are so very welcome when they come over here -- to become Americans.

So I want to say again how very happy we are that the Prime Minister has come over here, and I hope he will come back, or that we will go over there and meet with the other members of his government in London; and to meet the President of Poland, whom I have never had the pleasure of close acquaintanceship yet, but who, as head of the nation, still does represent a link which has been so welcome in America.

We are glad to have the Prime Minister with us, and I want to drink -- we are all very happy to drink -- to the health of the President of Poland, and through him the Prime Minister.

(the Toast was drunk)

The REPLY Of The Prime Minister Of Poland
Stanislaw Mikolajczyk
Delivered in English

Mr. President, Mesdames and Gentlemen: I am very grateful for the invitation. This is one of my happiest days, to meet nowadays the President of the United States, in those days which are so busy for him when the great events in Europe are happening.

I am very sorry for my English, it is not sufficient to express all my feelings. But if I may say, in 1941 when I met the American citizens of Polish descent, and I saw how happy they are here, how free they are here, I think when you are jealous it is the best thing. I was a little jealous why my people and my country cannot be so happy, and so free.

And today, when I have the honor to speak in the name of the Polish President and the Polish nation, when I have the honor to bring one of our friends who just six weeks ago was still in the underground of Poland fighting, and who in a few days will be back there, I have only one desire, the desire that our people, after this terrible war, can be as happy as are the American citizens under the presidency of your great President, Mr. Roosevelt, this President who through Providence is leading not only his own nation but in whose hands is also the future of the free, real and happy men of the future in every country. And I wish only one thing, that my people could be as happy

as are the citizens of the United States.

From our side I can promise one thing, we Poles even when somebody says sometimes many things, we Poles feel it is our duty to fight, to work to do everything that is possible to win the war, because we feel if we do our duty, so certainly the great ideas your President says to the nation will be also fulfilled to our nation.

So to you, Mr. President, I drink your health.

(the Toast was drunk)

STATEMENTS FILE

TOAST OF THE PRESIDENT

At The State Dinner For The

Prime Minister of Poland, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk

At The White House, June 7, 1944

I want to say how happy all of us are to welcome again to Washington the Prime Minister of Poland. I think he has arrived here at a very good time, because we have been able to have, even in the one hour this morning, a very frank talk about the future of Poland. Within his lifetime and mine we have seen the rebirth. In my boyhood and his, there was no independent Poland.

After he left me this morning, I had brought to me a series of sixteen maps, showing the map of Poland beginning in 1653. And it is rather an amazing fact that during these intervening years those sixteen maps show, first and last, that practically all of Central Europe was a part of Poland -- first and last.

Therefore, it is rather difficult to untangle the map of the Poland which very soon we hope is going to have its own government back. We hope the events of the past few days will result in the liberation of an independent Poland, with its own government and its own democracy.

And yet we can't go by history, because if we were to take one nation that I have in mind, Poland would include most of Russia, and a good part of Germany, and Czechoslovakia. We are not up to that time yet. We can't talk about it even.

We have got to do the practical thing. And that

is what the Prime Minister and I have been talking about: the practical restoration of Poland as a country which will be not merely self-governing but self-maintaining, not merely with its own democracy, but also the wherewithal to make both ends meet in food and the cost of living. I think we are as one on it. I think we have a meeting of the minds as to the principles and the desires of the future for the people of Poland.

And I hope some time very soon that steps will be taken, by which the people of Poland and the very large nation that lies to the east will become not merely good neighbors -- that is an essential -- but also two nations, one very, very large and the other a good deal smaller, that will be able to work out a mutual economic system by which there will be complete independence on the part of Poland.

At Teheran, I was very glad to have Marshal Stalin say, not once but several times, that he did not desire Poland to be an appendage of the Russian Soviet Republics but should, on the other hand, be a completely self-governing, large and completely independent nation.

Therefore, with that thought on the part of Marshal Stalin, I formed the conviction that sitting around the table and talking it over would do nobody any harm, that there can be a meeting of the minds, leaving out the smaller details, such as certain portions of what we call boundaries -- deferring them until a somewhat later time, when this new disease in Europe will be eradicated by the march of time.

I think of shell-shock. Three thousand miles away a good many people in the United States have got shell-shock at the present time. If we were close to the actual fighting, or if there were German troops in our midst, I am inclined to think that our shell-shock would be a great deal worse. And so some things must await the return of a word, which I never liked and which a former President used: normalcy, when we can think rather more quietly, and think in the longer terms of what is going to happen, not next year or the year after, or even ten years hence, but fifty years and a hundred years hence.

We go back in our relations with Poland to well over 150 years in our struggle for independence. We were very greatly helped by leading Poles -- who came over to help us from a sense of justice, from a sense of trying to help people who were trying to get self-expression -- the great Polish heroes who helped us in our first revolution. Through all the years we have watched a changing history, changing boundaries, changing designs.

I was saying to the Prime Minister that I go back to the last century, when I traveled over a large part of Europe on a bicycle, without a passport. I never carried a passport.

And I came to a barrier across the road, and a man came out, yawning, and wanted to know where I came from and where I was going.

I told him I was an American; and he said, after a few minutes of a few very simple questions, "Have you got enough money to live on?"

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Thereupon, he waved me through the barrier, and said, "Hope you have a good time."

There was a good deal of inter-marriage, interchanging of ideas and friendship between the nations of Europe then. Yet in the last fifty years that has all gone. It is a very sad thing about Europe, that that spirit has gone. It has become so nationalistic.

And yet we know there is the very great, one of the larger European nations -- Poland. It is right that they should continue to have their complete independence, and integrity, and the right spirit, because the spirit counts more than almost anything else.

And so the Prime Minister and I have been talking today -- and talk again tomorrow -- something about the spirit of the future of Europe, getting away from the mere questions of whether this town will be on this side of the line or that side of the line. There is a bigger thing than that -- and I am sure the Prime Minister agrees with me -- it is not just a question of class or of land ownership, it is a question of the population of Poland.

The Prime Minister has always worked, all his life, for the health of the people at the "bottom of the heap." There is a great deal to do for them, still more in the future than in the past. And yet we in this country recognize the value of the Polish population, the thing that goes back to hundreds of years,

the integrity of it, the good citizenship of it, the fact that they are not Poles in this country any more, they are Americans -- Americans of Polish descent. That is why they are so very welcome when they come over here -- to become Americans.

So I want to say again how very happy we are that the Prime Minister has come over here, and I hope he will come back, or that we will go over there and meet with the other members of his government in London; and to meet the President of Poland, whom I have never had the pleasure of close acquaintanceship yet, but who, as head of the nation, still does represent a link which has been so welcome in America.

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(the Toast was drunk)

The REPLY Of The Prime Minister Of Poland
Stanislaw Mikolajczyk
In English

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And today, when I have the honor to speak in the name of the Polish President and the Polish nation, when I have the honor to bring one of our friends who just six weeks ago was still in the underground of Poland fighting, and who in a few days will be back there, I have only one desire, the desire that our people, after this terrible war, can be as happy as are the American citizens under the presidency of your great President, Mr. Roosevelt, this President who through Providence is leading not only his own nation but in whose hands ^{is} ~~are~~ also the future of the free, real and happy men of the future in every country. And I wish only one thing, that my people could be as happy as *are*

the citizens of the United States.

From our side I can promise one thing, we Poles even when somebody says sometimes many things, we Poles feel it is our duty to fight, to work to do everything that is possible to win the war, because we feel if we do our duty, so certainly the great ideas your President says to the nation will be also fulfilled to our nation.

So to you, Mr. President, I drink your health.

(the Toast was drunk)

Jack Romagna —
This is OK —

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

OK

June 8, 1944

MEMO FOR GRACE TULLY:

Perhaps the President will be interested in seeing this rough draft of last night's exchange of toasts. Mr. Early has already seen it.

The second word on bottom line of page 4 is "population." I heard what sounded like "Polish spot," so am assuming population is the right word. I can't think of another word that fits.

Also, next to last paragraph, page 5, where President speaks of going over and meeting other members of government in London. London I never heard, but assume that is right. Could it be Varsaw?

Not necessary

The Prime Minister's reply I have edited a little. Perhaps it might be a good idea to send over to him while he is here and let him change it himself and return to us.

J. Romagna

JACK ROMAGNA:

S.T.E. has read and asked me to return this to you.

He suggests that the questions you bring up in your memorandum be given to Miss Tully. He feels sure she will help you clear them.

R. Russell

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 7, 1944

MEMO FOR MR. EARLY:

The second word on bottom line of page 4 is "population." I heard what sounded like "Polish spot," so am assuming population is the right word. I can't find another to fit.

Also, next to last paragraph, page 5, where President speaks of going over and meeting other members of government in London. London I never heard, but assume that is right. Could be Warsaw?

The Prime Minister's reply I have edited a little, but can furnish you an exact copy should you desire it. Perhaps you think it a good idea to send over to the Prime Minister and let him change it himself and return to us.

J. R. 
J. R. Hendon

Remarks of the President

I want to say how happy all of us are to welcome again to Washington the Prime Minister of Poland. I think he has ^{arrived} ~~gone~~ here at a very good time, because we have been able ^{to have,} ~~to have,~~ even in the one hour this morning, a very frank talk about the future of Poland. Within his lifetime and mine we have seen the rebirth.

— In my boyhood and his, — there was no independent Poland.

P ~~But~~ After he left me this morning, I had brought to me a series of sixteen maps, showing the map of Poland beginning in 1653. And it is rather ^{an} ~~a~~ amazing fact that during these intervening years those sixteen maps show that first and last, ~~practically~~ ^{practically} all of Central Europe was a part of Poland -- first and last. **P** Therefore, it is rather difficult to untangle the map of the Poland which very soon we hope is going to have its own government back. We hope ~~that~~ the events of the past few days will result in the liberation of ~~the~~ ^{an} independent Poland, with its own government and its own technique executive democracy.

P And ^{yet} ~~we~~ we can't go by history, because if we were to take one nation that I have in mind, Poland would include most of Russia, and a good part of Germany, and Czechoslovakia. We are not up to that time yet. We can't talk about it even. **P** We have got to do the practical thing. And that is what the Prime Minister and I have been talking about: — the practical restoration of Poland ^{as} ~~a~~ a country which will be not merely self-governing but self-maintaining, not merely with its own democracy, but also the wherewithal to make both ends meet in food and the cost of living. **P** I think we are ^{as} ~~on~~ one on it. I think we have a meeting of the minds as to the principles and the desires of the future for the people of Poland. ^{And} ~~that~~ I hope that some time very soon

~~There are~~ steps will be taken, by which the people of Poland and the very large nation that lies to the east will become not merely good neighbors -- that is an essential -- but also two nations, one very, very large and the other ~~smaller --~~ a good deal smaller, that will be able to work out ~~an~~ a mutual economic system by which there will be complete independence on the part of Poland.

~~And~~ At Teheran, I was very glad to have Marshal Stalin say, not once but several times, that he did not desire Poland to be an appendage of the Russian Soviet Republics, but should, on the other hand, be a completely self-governing, large and completely independent nation. ~~And~~ Therefore, with that thought on the part of Marshal Stalin, I formed the conviction that sitting around the table and talking it over would do nobody any harm, ~~and~~ that there can be a meeting of the minds, leaving out the smaller details, ~~some details~~ such ~~as~~ as certain portions of what we call boundaries, ~~deferring~~ deferring them until a somewhat later time, when this new disease in Europe will be eradicated by the march of time.

I think of
~~shell-shock~~ shell-shock. Three thousand miles away a good many people in the United States have got shell-shock at the present time. If we were close to the actual fighting, or if there were German troops in our midst, ~~then~~ I am inclined to think that our shell-shock would be a great deal worse. And so some things must await the return of a word, which I never liked and which a former President used: ~~normalcy~~ normalcy, when we can think rather more quietly, and think in the longer terms of what is going to happen, not next year or the year after, or even ten years hence, but fifty years and a hundred years hence. ~~We go~~

back in our relations with Poland, ^{to} well over 150 years in our struggle for independence. ^{We were} ~~very~~ greatly helped by leading Poles [^] who came over to help us, from a sense of justice, from a ~~sense~~ of trying to help people who were trying to get self-expression. ^{-- the} ~~the~~ great Polish heroes who helped us in our first revolution. Through all the years we have watched ~~the~~ a changing history, ~~the~~ changing boundaries, changing designs.

P I was saying to ~~Nikolaczys~~ ^{Nikolaczys} that I go back -- the Prime Minister ~~the~~ to the last century, when I traveled over [^] a large part of Europe on a bicycle, without a passport. I never carried a passport. ^{P And} [^] I came to a barrier across the road, and a man came out, yawning, and wanted to know where I came from and where I was going. *P* I told him I was an American; and he said, after a few minutes of a few very ~~the~~ simple questions, "Have you got enough money to live ~~on~~ on?" *P* I said, "Yes, I have ten pounds on the handlebars of my bicycle." *P* Thereupon, he ~~and~~ waved me through the barrier, and said, "Hope you have a good time."

P There was a good deal of inter-marriage, interchange ^{ing} of ideas and friendship between the nations of ~~Europe~~ Europe ^{the} ~~and~~ ^{ing} yet in the last fifty years that has all gone. It is a very sad thing about Europe, that that spirit has gone. It ^{has} become ^{so} so nationalistic. *P* And yet we know ~~that~~ there is the great --

For example the very great, one of the larger ~~the~~ European nations -- Poland. ~~and~~ It is right that they should ~~have --~~ continue to have their complete independence, and integrity, and the right spirit, because the spirit ~~counts~~ counts more than almost anything else.

⁻⁻ And so the Prime Minister and I have been talking today [^] and talk again tomorrow [^] something about the spirit of

4
the future of Europe, getting away from ^{the} mere questions of whether this town will be on this side of the line or that side of the line. There is a bigger thing than that ^{--and} I am sure ~~that~~ the Prime Minister agrees with me ⁻⁻ and I am sure that you agree ~~agrees~~ with me and I know history ~~that~~ ^{it} is not just a question of class or of land ownership, it is a question of the population of ~~the~~ Poland.

The Prime Minister has always worked, all his life, for the ~~the~~ ^{for the} health of the people at the "bottom of the heap." There is a great deal to do for them, still more in the future than in the past. And yet we in this country recognize the value of the Polish spot the thing that goes back to hundreds of years, the integrity of it, the good citizenship of it, ^{the} ~~the~~ fact that they are not Poles in this country any more, they are Americans ⁻⁻ Americans of Polish descent, ~~and~~ that is why they are so very welcome when they come over here -- to become Americans.

So I want to say again how very happy we are that the Prime Minister has come over here, and I hope he will come back, ~~and~~ or that we will go over there and meet with the other members of his government in ^{London} ~~London~~; and ~~that~~ ~~that~~ to meet ~~with~~ the President of Poland, whom I have never had the pleasure of close acquaintanceship yet, but who, as ~~the~~ head of the nation still ^{for} ~~does~~ represent a link which has been so welcome in America. ^{and} ~~and~~ We are glad to have the Prime Minister with us, and ^{sk} ~~I want to drink~~ ~~we~~ we are all very happy to drink ⁻⁻ to the health of the President of Poland, and through him the Prime Minister.

Remarks of the Prime Minister of Poland, in English:

Mr. President, Mesdames, and Gentlemen:

I am very grateful for the invitation, ^{this is} ~~and I as~~ one of my happiest days, to meet ~~KMKA~~ nowadays the President of the United States, ^{in those} ~~in those~~ days ^{which} ~~which~~ are so busy for him when the great events in Europe are happen^{ing} ~~ing~~. I am very sorry for my English, it is not sufficient to express ~~How~~.

MADAME PERKINS: It's good.

~~And~~ all my feelings. But if I may say 1941 when I met the American citizens of Polish descent and I ^{saw} ~~have seen~~ how happy they are here, how free they are here, I think when you are jealous it is the best thing. I was a little jealous why my people and my country cannot be so happy, and so free. ^PAnd today, when I have the honor to speak in the name of the Polish President and the Polish nation, when I have the honor to bring one of our friends who just six weeks ago was still in the underground of Poland fighting, and who in a few days ~~may be --~~ will be back there, I have only one desire, ^{the} ~~the~~ desire that our people, after ^{this} ~~the~~ terrible war, can be ^{as} ~~so~~ happy as are the American citizens under the Presidency of ^{your} ~~the~~ great President, Mr. Roosevelt, this President who through ~~the~~ ^P Providence is ~~just~~ leading not only his own nation but in whose hands, ^{the} ~~the~~ also the future of the free, real and happy men of the future in every country. And I wish only one, ^{thing, that} ~~that~~ my people could be ^{as} ~~so~~ happy as ^{are} ~~are~~ the citizens of the United States. ^PFrom our side I can promise one thing, we Poles even when somebody says sometimes many things, we Poles feel it is our duty to fight, to work to do everything ^{that} ~~what~~ is possible ^{to win the} ~~to bring everything~~ ^{during} ~~what~~ is possible ^{during} ~~during~~ war,

because we feel if we do our duty, so certainly may be also the great ideas your President says to the nation will be also fulfilled to our nation.

So to you, Mr. President, *I drink your health.*