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(ERNEST BEVIN TO LORD INVERCHAPEL)

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CONVERSATION WITH MR. MATTHEWS (UNITED STATES
STATE DEPARTMENT)

Mr. Bevin to Lord Inverchapel (Washington)

(No. 441) Foreign Office,
My Lord, 5th March, 1947

With reference to my despatch No. 417 of 3rd March, I transmit herewith the record of a conversation which I had with Mr. Matthews of the State Department on 28th February regarding various German questions likely to arise at the Moscow Conference.

2. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Paris, Moscow, The Hague and Brussels, and to the Political Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief in Germany.

I am, &c.
ERNEST BEVIN.

Enclosure

Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and Mr. Matthews of the United States State Department at the Foreign Office on 28th February, 1947

Polish-German Frontier

The Secretary of State referred to the provisional frontier accepted at Potsdam and said that the Poles had not been able to repopulate the territory which they had acquired, partly perhaps owing to uncertainty about its future status. The Polish attitude was unsatisfactory on many matters. We did not intend to make an issue of the Polish elections, but we were anxious to know (a) what use would be made of the territory between the Western and Eastern Neisse; (b) what prospects were there for the Poles outside Poland returning there and earning their living. There had been an amnesty, but it was not clear whether this was satisfactory. The Secretary of State's intention was to press the Russians to say what should be done with this valuable agricultural land.

Mr. Matthews said that the United States Government had no intention of arguing about the elections, but they felt strongly that the German population was greater than had been anticipated, and

that the territory provisionally ceded to Poland, which had formerly had a population of 9 million, now had less than 4 million inhabitants. They agreed that it was most important that the best possible use should be made of this area. They also agreed that Poland should be given compensation for what she had lost in the east, but the Potsdam frontier gave her too much. They did not wish to argue about East Prussia, but they were going to propose a revision of the Polish-German frontier back to the Oder in Silesia and east of the Oder further north. They would fall back if necessary on a frontier in Silesia along the Eastern Neisse. In any case, they felt there was great tactical advantage in not legalising the present frontier unless there was general agreement all round on German questions. Mr. Matthews thought it was possible that the Russians would now show some favour to the Germans on this question having achieved their objectives in Poland.

The Secretary of State thought it most unlikely that the Russians would cede the Lwow area to Poland so that Poland should restore territory to Germany, as had at one time been reported. He suggested that it would be useful for British and American experts together to work out what would be the proper line of the frontier.

In conclusion, Mr. Matthews said that it was Mr. Marshall's definite intention to oppose the present frontier and the Secretary of State said that he had an open mind on the question.

Procedure

It was agreed that it would be best if the Austrian Deputies started work at once as the Deputies had in fact agreed to do and that a very early effort should be made to obtain agreement that the Ministers should study Austrian questions from time to time during the course of the German discussions and not postpone all consideration of Austria until the German questions were finished.

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W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950,
MG 26 J 4, Volume 370, pages C255990-C256905

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