Like his British hosts, Mikolajczyk hoped that ultimately it would be possible to reach an understanding with the Soviet Union and thus to preserve Polish independence. Not all of his colleagues shared his optimism. In fact, the signs of polarization within his government were becoming increasingly apparent. During a Cabinet debate on the demarcation line between the Soviet Union and Poland, which Mikolajczyk agreed in February should run east of Lwow, two Socialist Ministers, Ludwik Grosfeld and Jan Kwapinski, refused to support the motion. Many officials in Polish circles suspected that Mikolajczyk was going a little too far to accommodate himself to the British and Soviet points of view. The two viewpoints with regard to Soviet demands which always had been present within the Polish government, and to a lesser degree among the Poles in Great Britain, became more pronounced in the winter of 1944. One side, favoring concessions to the Kremlin if reconciliation were possible, was led by Mikolajczyk, with a majority of the Peasant Party and a sprinkling of Socialists. The other side maintained that concessions would be ineffectual and if they must be made, the Kremlin should reciprocate with concrete concessions of its own. This group included almost the entire armed forces, with Generals Kazimierz Sosnkowski and Wladyslaw Anders, President Wladyslaw Raczkiewicz, former Foreign Minister August Zaleski, former Polish Ambassador to France Juliusz Lukasiewicz, a majority of the Socialists, all the National Democrats, and a faction of the Peasant Party under Zygmunt Nagorski.¹

Despite scepticism among his compatriots and a lack of confidence in his policy among some of his colleagues, he remained steadfast in his views. In an effort to secure United States support for his government’s future negotiations with the Kremlin, Mikolajczyk travelled to Washington in the summer of 1944. At this time he remained unaware of Roosevelt’s commitment to

the Curzon Line at Teheran and operated under the illusion that the United States wanted all territorial settlements left until the war’s end. The President did nothing to dispel the notions. On the contrary Roosevelt said he “did not agree on the formula based upon the old Curzon Line.” While he indicated that “at an appropriate time” he would help Poland to retain Lwow and obtain territories in the west, he thought that personal conversations between Stalin and Mikolajczyk would serve a “useful purpose.” It was agreed that the President would send a personal telegram to Stalin requesting the direct negotiations. Offering a word of encouragement, Roosevelt said he was convinced that the Russians were sincere in their desire for a strong independent Poland.

Like a group leaving a pep rally, the Poles returned from the Washington visit bolstered by Roosevelt’s assurances and less willing than ever to compromise their position. In his dispatch to the civilian component of the Polish Underground Mikolajczyk emphasized that the talks with Stalin would not be dependent on Soviet conditions, nor would there be a risk that, if the talks failed, Poland would be left alone by America for Roosevelt had ensured him that there was no such danger. “Furthermore,” he continued, “he is against the Curzon Line.”

Eden captured the British consternation at this turn of events by remarking “The Poles are deluding themselves if they place any faith in these vague and generous promises. The President will not be embarrassed by them hereafter, any more than by the specific undertaking he has given to restore the French Empire.” More significant than the British reaction was that of Stalin. In response to Roosevelt’s inquiry, Stalin claimed that, while the reconstruction of the Polish government and recognition of the Curzon Line were prerequisites for improved Polish-Soviet relations, Mikolajczyk’s recent statements “make it appear that he has not made a step forward on this point.” Consequently Stalin found it “hard to express an opinion” on the proposed visit. With this evasion, Roosevelt, who earlier had


