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THE SOVIET-POLISH TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENT

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Division of Research for the USSR and Eastern Europe

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**THE SOVIET-POLISH TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENT
OF FEBRUARY 15, 1951**

Announcement and Ratification by Poland

On May 22, 1951, the Soviet Government and the Polish Government simultaneously announced that they had concluded an agreement to make two changes in the existing frontier between Poland and the USSR. According to the official announcements, the changes were to involve the cession of a small piece of Soviet territory to Poland and the cession of an equal area of Polish territory to the USSR, in both cases near the southern end of the Polish-Soviet frontier. There had been no indication prior to this announcement that the two governments were discussing a frontier rectification. Official communiques following shortly after the first announcement stated that the agreement had been signed in Moscow on February 15 of this year by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Vishinsky and Polish Vice Premier Alexander Zawadzki. A bill for ratification of the agreement by Poland was presented to the Sejm on May 25 and was un-animously passed next day, to the accompaniment, the Polish Radio reported, of "long applause" by the members of the Sejm.

Description of the Territories ✓

The location and size of the territories to be exchanged were only roughly indicated in the initial announcements, which at first simply stated that Poland would surrender a part of Lublin Province in return for a part of the Drohobycz district of the Ukrainian S.S.R. Subsequent official communiques located these two areas respectively (1) in the angle of the Bug and Solokija rivers, southeast of Hrubieszow, and (2) in the angle formed by the River San and the overland frontier south of Przemysl. A more precise description of the territory to be ceded to the USSR was given on May 25 by Vice Premier Zawadzki of Poland in a statement to the Sejm, in which he said that this territory would consist of 480 square kilometers lying between the Bug, Solokija and Huczwa rivers and would embrace four Polish townships in their entirety (Chorobrow, Krystynopol, Belz and Uhnov) together with parts of three others (Drohobyczow, Warez and Tarnoszyn). From this it was clear that the USSR was to acquire those sections of the Lwow -- Kowel and the Rawa Ruska -- Kowel railway lines heretofore lying on the Polish side of the frontier, together with a strip of land varying in width from perhaps 5 to 15 kilometers on the westward side of these lines.

The area to be transferred in turn to Poland was less precisely indicated by Zawadzki, who stated only that it lay near the town of Ustrzyki Dolne and that it would embrace, in area, exactly the same number of square kilometers as the territory for

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which it was to be exchanged. Zawadzki's statement and other early official Polish news releases asserted that this territorial acquisition would give Poland badly needed oil and natural gas deposits. Nothing was said of an improvement in Polish railway connections similar to the rail links to be ceded to the USSR, although mention was made of "suitable transport facilities" that would enable Poland to exploit timber in the newly-acquired district.¹ Owing to this failure to refer explicitly to the railway line connecting Przemysl with Sanok, which at present runs in part through Soviet territory, it appeared doubtful that more than a part of this line would be included in the transaction. If this is true, the territory to be acquired by Poland lies to the south of Dobromil and Chyrow and probably does not include those towns. Possibly the Soviet cession is to consist simply of that portion of the prewar Polish county of Lesko, including the town of Ustrzyki Dolne, which was left on the Soviet side of the frontier in the postwar territorial settlement -- an area roughly equal in size to the area (480 sq. km.) mentioned by Zawadzki.

From Zawadzki's statement it can be inferred that the total area included in the two territories to be exchanged is 960 square kilometers. This is an area slightly larger than that of the Free Territory of Trieste. The transaction will apparently have the effect of shifting the present Soviet-Polish frontier by as much as 15 - 20 kilometers at some points.

Provisions for Transfer of Population and Property

The actual redrawing of the boundary and the settlement of all the problems involved, including transfers of population and property, is expected to require several months, according to the statement of Zawadzki. He declared that the task of delimitation would be carried out by a mixed Soviet-Polish delimitation commission, which "in the two to three months following the exchange of ratification instruments" would trace the new boundary in accordance with the description and map attached to the agreement of February 15. In addition, another mixed commission will regulate transfers of property in the two areas in question. There is also to be a general transfer of the population. All in all, changes of the magnitude indicated by Zawadzki would appear to require at least the remainder of the year 1951 for their completion.

Whether the entire population of both districts is to be exchanged remains unclear. Zawadzki, in his statement of May 25, said merely that "the agreement provides for the resettlement of the population in the area covered by the agreement." He added that there were 14,000 people in the districts to be ceded by Poland. Although this seemed to imply that all 14,000 would be resettled into Poland, Zawadzki in his next sentence used the phrase "Polish population" in reference to those who would be resettled. Hence the possibility cannot be excluded that he was referring to

1. Trybuna Ludu, Warsaw, May 22, 1951.

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only a part of the population, and that a number of non-Polish inhabitants, probably Ukrainians, also still reside there despite the general exchange of Ukrainians and Poles carried out during 1944-47 and may be transferred to the USSR along with the territory. As for the district around Ustrzyki Dolne to be transferred to Poland, Zawadzki gave no indication of the number of inhabitants now residing in this area.

The transfer of individual and other property in the two exchanged districts is to be governed by a protocol attached to the agreement of February 15. According to Zawadzki's statement in the Sejm, this protocol gives the inhabitants who are to be resettled the right to take with them all of their movable property. As for non-private property, the protocol provides that Poland and the USSR shall "transfer to each other intact" all immovable state property, "cooperative-kolkhoz property" and cooperative property, "as well as other social property including industrial equipment, railway lines and means of communication." The transfer is to be across the board and without compensation -- a principle which, according to Zawadzki, will be "of special significance for Poland's interests."

Economic Results of the Agreement

The advantages to be gained by Poland from the proposed exchange of territory were a principal theme of the early official Polish comments on the agreement. All official communiques from Warsaw stressed that the idea of the exchange had originated with the Polish Government. Moreover, they implied that Poland would have a large net gain from the transaction. Vice Premier Zawadzki, in his Sejm statement of May 25, declared:

"The exchange of frontier districts was proposed by the Polish Government, which, acting in accordance with the interests of our economy, approached the Soviet Government on the subject. The Polish initiative was warmly welcomed by the Soviet Government, and the negotiations, conducted in an atmosphere of genuine friendship and mutual understanding, have led to the conclusion of the agreement.... The basic factor which induced the Polish Government to make the proposal to exchange the districts in question and to sign the agreement is the oil fields, with a considerable number of active oil wells, and the resources of natural gas, in the territory ceded to us by the Soviet Union. It follows therefore that, owing to this agreement, we obtain fuel that is particularly valuable and indispensable for our economy. On the other hand, the Soviet Union derives from this agreement certain advantages for railway transport.... In the light of the aforesaid facts, and considering that the agreement submitted by the Government today for ratification represents a further strengthening of our economic potential and conforms to our vital

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needs, I propose, on behalf of the Government, the passage of the bill for ratification."

Similarly, the Warsaw daily Trybuna Ludu of May 22 commented:

"The exchange is to our advantage because for a predominantly agricultural area, in which the Soviet state is interested for reasons of transport facilities only, we are getting an area most important to our national economy. We are getting land rich in oil, rich in natural gas, in raw materials which are so important to our industry.... We are getting a piece of land which, due to suitable transport facilities, will enable adjacent vast forests to be exploited."

There has been as yet no official Polish statement giving figures for the amount of oil and natural gas the Polish Government expects to add to Poland's total output through the territory to be acquired under the agreement. It seems clear, even from the vague description initially issued, that the area to be transferred to Poland does not extend as far as the important oil field at Boryslaw and Drohobycz. There are, however, a number of oil and gas wells near the headwaters of the Dniester River about 15 kilometers southeast of Ustrzyki Dolne; presumably it is these that comprise the mineral acquisitions mentioned in the Polish communiques. The present capacity of the Ustrzyki Dolne field is unknown, but it can hardly be great, even by Polish standards, as this was never, in the prewar period, one of the leading petroleum-producing districts. Nevertheless, in the present situation of tight oil supply under the Polish Six-Year Plan, any accretion of resources is significant for the Polish Government.

The advantage to the USSR, on the other hand, of acquiring the railway lines linking Lwow and Rawa Ruska with Kowel and Brest appears to be considerable. These lines, when broadened to Soviet gauge, will give the USSR a direct north-south connection along an important segment of its western frontier. Until now this has been the only important Soviet railway link cut off by the existing frontier with Poland. The acquisition of this link is undoubtedly of military as well as economic significance for the USSR.

Origin of the Existing Boundary

The Soviet-Polish agreement of February 15, 1951, alters the frontier that was established in principle by the US, the USSR and the UK in the Yalta Agreement of February 1945. On that occasion the heads of government of the three major powers declared that they "consider that the Eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon line with digressions from it in some regions of 5 to 8 kilometers in favor of Poland." In accordance with this settlement, the Soviet and Polish governments concluded a boundary treaty in Moscow on August 16, 1945, describing the gen-

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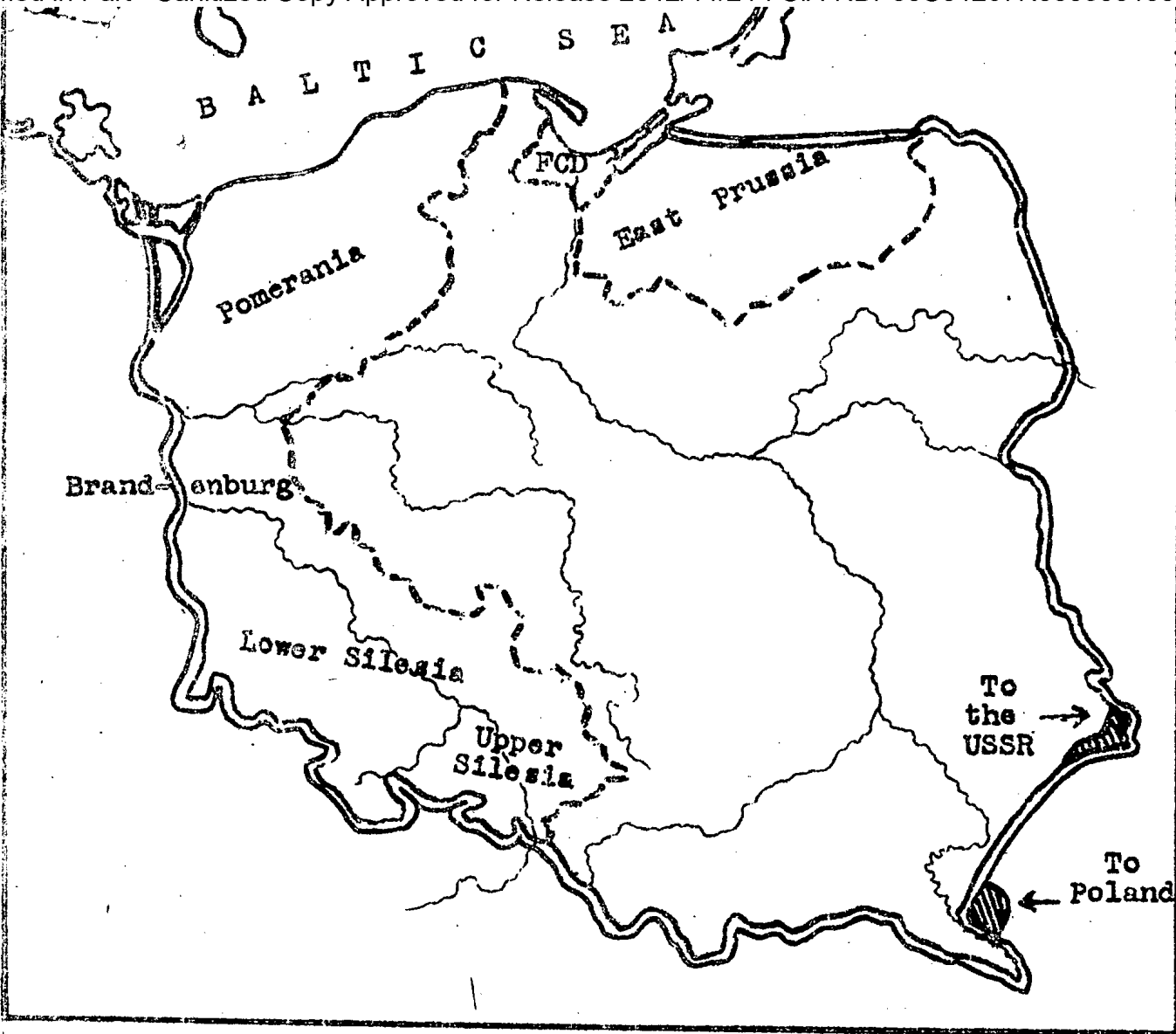
eral course of the new frontier and providing for its delimitation by a mixed Soviet-Polish boundary commission. The commission carried out its task between May 1946 and April 1947 and signed a protocol at Warsaw on April 30, 1947, containing a detailed summary of the results of its delimitation, together with maps showing the course of the frontier.

On July 8, 1948, Poland and the USSR signed a further treaty at Moscow, establishing principles for determining and marking the boundary in the field, and for inspecting and maintaining boundary signs. On the same date they signed a convention establishing a procedure for the settlement of disputes and conflicts arising along the boundary.




The Polish and non-Polish populations on either side of the Curzon Line were for the most part exchanged during the period 1944-47 under a Soviet-Polish program of population transfer. This program was provided for by a population-exchange agreement signed by the Polish Committee of National Liberation at Lublin and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on September 9, 1944, and by similar agreements with the White Russian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics, signed on September 9 and September 22, 1944, respectively. In accordance with these three agreements about 1.25 million Poles were moved west of the Curzon Line between 1944 and 1947 (787,600 from the Ukrainian S.S.R., 274,163 from the White Russian S.S.R. and 178,013 from the Lithuanian S.S.R.)¹. It has been estimated that over 400,000 Ukrainians, White Russians and Lithuanians were resettled to the east of the Curzon Line under the same agreements. These agreements are not to be confused with the Polish-Soviet population-exchange agreement of July 6, 1945, which provided mainly for the return to Poland of persons in the interior of the USSR who had had Polish citizenship prior to September 17, 1939. The latter agreement affected principally Poles who had been deported to the USSR during World War II. By its operation over 250,000 persons were returned to Poland during 1944-47.²

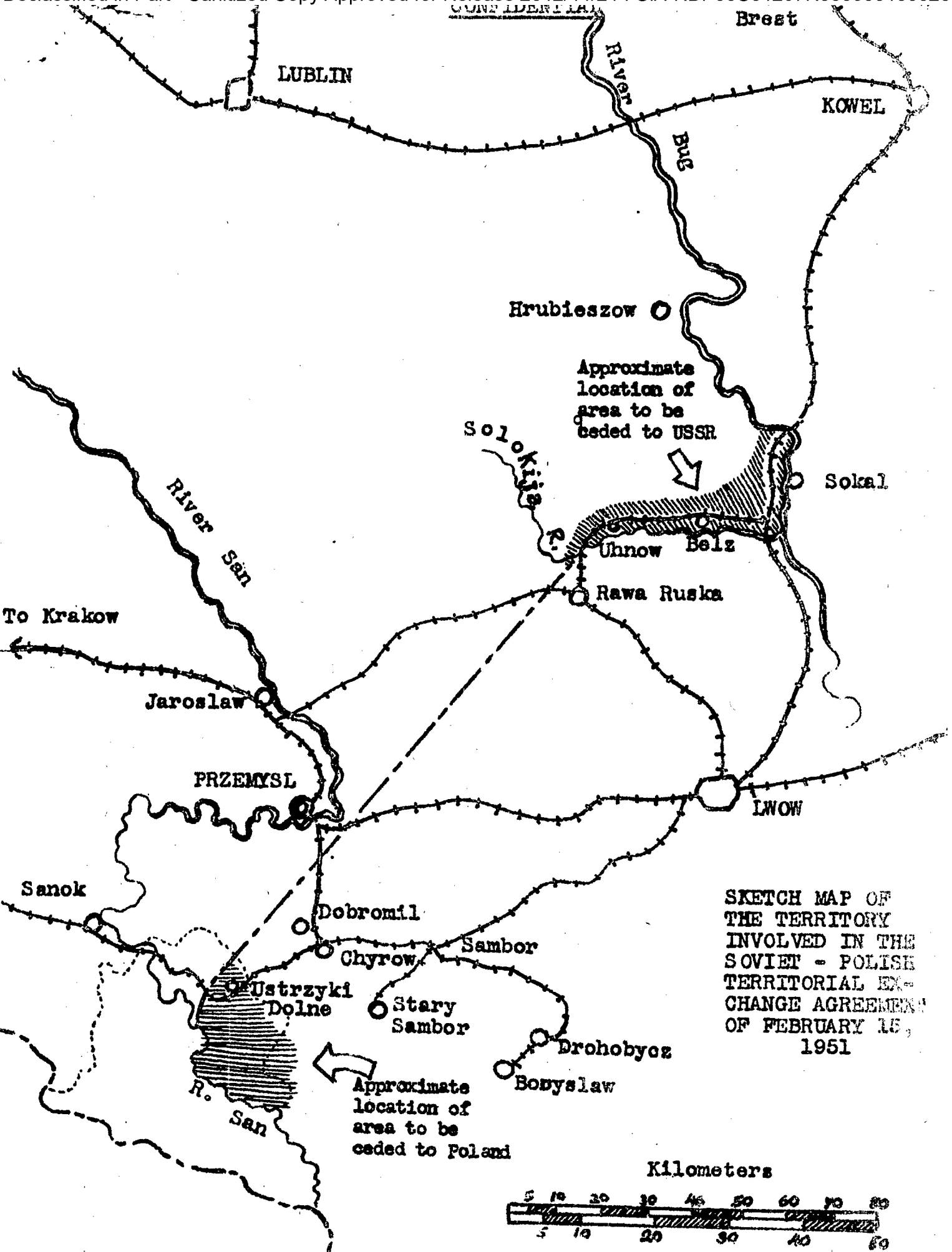
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1. Poland, Rocznik Statystyczny 1948, Warsaw, 1949, p. 28.
 2. Ibid., p. 28.

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POLAND: TERRITORIES ANNEXED AT THE CLOSE OF WORLD WAR TWO (1945) AND TERRITORIES EXCHANGED WITH THE U.S.S.R. IN 1951

-  Polish state frontiers after the Potsdam Agreement (1945)
-  Frontiers between Poland, Germany and the Free City of Danzig, 1919 - 1939.
-  Areas exchanged with the U.S.S.R. under the agreement signed in Moscow on February 15, 1951.



SKETCH MAP OF THE TERRITORY INVOLVED IN THE SOVIET - POLISH TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENT OF FEBRUARY 15, 1951

