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ROOSEVELT AND STALIN ON THE BALTIC STATES

(At the Teheran Conference, on Nov. 28, 1943, according to minutes prepared by Mr. Bohlen of the U.S. delegation.)

The President then said he would be interested in the question of assuring the approaches to the Baltic Sea and had in mind some form of trusteeship with perhaps an international state in the vicinity of the Kiel Canal to insure free navigation in both directions through the approaches. Due to some error of the Soviet translator Marshal Stalin apparently thought that the President was referring to the question of the Baltic States. On the basis of this understanding, he replied categorically that the Baltic States had by an expression of the will of the people voted to join the Soviet Union and this question was not therefore one for discussion...

The President went on to say that there were a number of persons of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian origin, in that order, in the United States. He said that he fully realized the three Baltic Republics had in history and again more recently been a part of Russia and added jokingly that when the Soviet armies re-occupied these areas, he did not intend to go to war with the Soviet Union on this point.

He went on to say that the big issue in the United States, insofar as public opinion went, would be the question of referendum and the right of self-determination. He said he thought that world opinion would want some expression of the will of the people, perhaps not immediately after their re-occupation by Soviet forces, but some day, and that he personally was confident that the people would vote to join the Soviet Union.

Marshal Stalin replied that the three Baltic Republics had no autonomy under the last Czar who had been an ally of Great Britain and the United States, but that no one had raised the question of public opinion, and he did not quite see why it was being raised now.

The President replied that the truth of the matter was that the public neither knew nor understood.

Marshal Stalin answered that they should be informed and some propaganda work should be done.

He added that as to the expression of the will of the people, there would be lots of opportunities for that to be done in accordance with the Soviet Constitution but that he could not agree to any form of international control.

The President replied it would be helpful for him personally if some public declaration in regard to the future elections to which Marshal had referred, could be made.

Marshal Stalin repeated there would be plenty of opportunities for such an expression of the will of the people

Digest of International Law. Prepared by Marjorie M. Whiteman. Dept. of State Publication 7737. Rel. Oct. 1964, Vol. 3, pp. 219-22.