

**October 23, 1965**

**Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Rusk and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Jozef Winiewicz, 'Security, Non-Proliferation and the German Problem'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

This wide-ranging discussion between Rusk and Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Jozef Winiewicz on European security, nuclear weapons, and the problem of German reunification illuminated U.S. and Polish concerns about the future of Germany.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
DATE: October 23, 1965  
PLACE: James Madison Room,  
Department of State.

SUBJECT: Security, Non-Proliferation and the German Problem

US  
PARTICIPANTS: The Secretary  
John A. Gronouski,  
Postmaster General  
Walter J. Stoessel, Jr.,  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for European Affairs  
Raymond E. Lisle, Director,  
Office of Eastern European  
Affairs

POLISH  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Jozef Winiewicz  
Ambassador Edward Drozniak  
Zdislaw Szewczyk, Counselor,  
Polish Embassy  
Czeslaw Makowski, Counselor,  
Polish Embassy

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The Secretary emphasized the importance of a permanent solution of the problem of Central Europe. Since 1947 the US has had to put some \$800 billion into defense. This is an astronomical figure. Undoubtedly the socialist world has made expenditures which, compared to their economic base, are relatively as great. More than half of these expenditures by us result from the fact that the German question has gone unresolved. Think of what a solution of the German problem guaranteed by both the US and the Soviet Union would mean <sup>much</sup> in terms of resources that would be made available for the tasks of peace. Here in the US alone it would make it possible to provide one million new school rooms. Until the problem of the reunification of Germany is solved there is a cancer in Central Europe. If the 17 million East Germans in the free expression of their will said that they would like a state of their own, we would accept it. If they decided freely that they wished to join with West Germany, the other side should take a comparable position. What were the Foreign Minister's views on how we can reduce antagonisms in Central Europe. After all, no one has a greater interest in this problem than has Poland.

Mr. Winiewicz replied that it would be possible to move whenever it was agreed that the problem of European security need not be subordinated to the German problem. The neighbors of the Federal Republic must first feel secure. Present developments in the Federal Republic disturb Poland exceedingly. Revanchists like Seebohn are in the new Cabinet. There is discussion of including the Germans in Western nuclear arrangements. The Germans are a dynamic

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people. Once given a voice in nuclear arrangements, they are likely ultimately to achieve decisive influence. The Polish Government has made a series of proposals. There has been in these no suggestion that the Federal Republic must leave NATO. The Polish legal advisers were instructed to avoid the sensitive issue of added recognition to the German Democratic Republic. However, neither the Rapacki Plan, nor the Gomulka modifications, has been found acceptable. The Poles proposed plans for denuclearization and, then, for freezing nuclear arrangements in Central Europe. They were told that these plans created great difficulties as modifying the relative military positions of the great powers. The Poles have been looking for a plan which would not change the military positions of the great powers. In recent discussions between Foreign Minister Rapacki and Spaak, they formulated a new plan which has been the subject of diplomatic discussions with a number of countries. Only a small part of it is yet in writing. It is a non-proliferation plan. The parties entering into the agreement would declare that no non-nuclear power would accept or produce nuclear weapons. This should present no problem to the major powers. Spaak asked in this connection about personnel and conventional weapons. To meet this problem, the Poles are conducting discussions on a control system which would embrace observation posts against surprise attack. The details of the plan would be worked out in diplomatic discussions with European and other major powers. The UK answered their proposals by saying that the reaction of the new government in Bonn must be awaited. Bonn rejected the Rapacki plan; will they reject this as well? The Poles proposed a conference on European security. The Danes and Norwegians made the point that any such conference must be well prepared. The Poles agreed. The Swedes wondered how the French would react to the idea that the US would be invited to participate. The French reacted rationally and made clear that they fully recognized that there must be US participation. Such a conference and the working out of a plan of the type that is proposed could begin the historical process of solving the German problem. This outlines what the Poles are now doing. It has not been easy to convince their socialist friends with regard to these proposals. However, even the East Germans have now agreed that we may move forward.

Mr. Winiewicz stated that the Poles are very aware of the fact that Germany was the cradle of communism. Five million Germans had voted in the thirties for the communist candidate for President. This tradition of communism in Germany has been maintained and furthered in East Germany and represents a good start to understanding in Central Europe. The Poles recognize that German reunification must take place some day. It is essential however that we talk first of security.

The Secretary inquired why if in fact they were convinced that the East Germans followed the tradition of five million Communist voters, the Poles were unwilling to have free elections in East Germany.

Mr. Winiewicz replied that the Poles were afraid of German elections. Hitler had been voted into power in an election. The generation of Germans which voted for Hitler is still alive as are those who were educated under Hitler. Added to this is the bitterness of a people who lost the war. Even in the US, the Southerners have not yet forgotten the wounds of the Civil War. There is

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still bitterness in the South of the type which exists in Germany. How would the people of Mississippi vote in free elections on integration? This bitterness existed even in East Germany. Ulbricht told me that he had been booed in East Germany when in 1950 he recognized the Oder-Neisse line as the frontier. Since that time a process of reeducation has been going on in East Germany but not in West Germany. The German people must be told that the frontier will not be changed and that their narrow interests must be subordinated to those of Europe as a whole.

The Secretary commented that when the South lost the war it had turned to infiltration of the victors as illustrated by the fact that the President came from Texas and the Secretary of State from Georgia. When the Poles talked of European security without German reunification, they were freezing the status quo and, in effect, saying to the Germans that they can't live together as one country as they wish. There is no concern about the present generation of German leadership but what will German leadership be 25 years from now if the Germans are told "You may not live together." This might cause the reappearance of a Hitler. We were trying to guard against the reappearance of a Hitler by ensuring that the Germans are a part of the fiber of Europe. There can be no security until the issue of German reunification is resolved.

Mr. Winiewicz replied his position was not that there could not be reunification but that there must first be a feeling of security on the part of Germany's neighbors. He could say on the basis of recent conferences with statesmen of other countries there was no feeling of security--not in West Europe, except perhaps in the Netherlands, not in Scandinavia, not in Italy. Basic to all progress was a system of security.

The Secretary inquired whether progress could not be made both on reunification and security at the same time.

Mr. Winiewicz doubted this. We must start with security. Even a small step, such as stopping the development of nuclear armament in Central Europe, would create confidence and lead to further progress between East and West.

The Secretary said he was very conscious of a certain absence of reciprocity in discussion of these problems. The West has said that the German question will not be solved by force. Have the Warsaw Pact countries ever solemnly committed themselves to the renunciation of force in solving the problems of Central Europe?

Mr. Winiewicz replied that perhaps it had never been said because it was unnecessary as this was so clearly the policy of the socialist world.

The Secretary said that the West has repeated this time after time. On the other hand in Vienna in 1961, Khrushchev threatened President Kennedy with war over Berlin. We had to add \$6 billion to our defense budget as a consequence.

Mr. Winiewicz replied that this report that Khrushchev had threatened President Kennedy with war over Berlin amazed him.

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The Secretary commented that he didn't care what people said about their ideologies. We are interested in what they do. At one time, Muslim ideology called for the propagation of the faith by force.

If they still say it, however, they don't do anything about it. The West has made the most solemn commitments to avoid force in the solution of the problem of Central Europe. There is no similar commitment by Eastern Europe.

Mr. Winiewicz said he was "making mental note of all this."

The Secretary inquired whether Mr. Winiewicz and other Poles really lost any sleep over the Oder-Neisse line.

Mr. Winiewicz replied that he did lose sleep over it not merely for the Poles but for the peace of Europe.

The Secretary inquired whether if the Germans were to say that they would recognize the frontier between Poland and Germany, not between Poland and East Germany, what would the Poles reply?

Mr. Winiewicz asked why the Secretary sought to make things more difficult. After all, in the Rapacki and Gomulka plans, the Poles had worked on the principle that no agreement should be embarrassing to the Federal Republic as a backdoor recognition of the GDR. But after all the GDR does exist.

The Secretary asked whether Ulbricht had accepted the Oder-Neisse line.

Mr. Winiewicz replied that Ulbricht had made a very forceful public speech to this effect in 1958.

Mr. Winiewicz said he had had some very frank discussions with West German diplomats who had said frankly that the Polish-German boundary was not the real problem. Reunification was.

Mr. Winiewicz felt we could make an immediate start in building European security. The West Germans said privately they don't want nuclear weapons and won't produce them. Why not say this openly and accept a non-nuclear zone in Central Europe? We could then start thinning out conventional weapons as well. If the rest of the world should decide that there is to be no nonsense about the status quo, the Germans would talk to one another.

The Secretary asked whether the Poles would not be disturbed and seek reunification if 17 million Poles lived across a line of demarcation.

Mr. Winiewicz replied that he could not see what harm there was in related people living in two states. After all, the US and Canada have much in common but they are two countries.

The Secretary replied that we would have no difficulty at all in accepting two Germanys, if the people of the two areas freely voted for this as a solution.

Mr. Winiewicz

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Mr. Winiewicz said he was convinced on the basis of private talks with German diplomats that West Germany would accept the Oder-Neisse line if the Western great powers did so.

The Secretary replied we had a deep political commitment to the Germans. Any solution, either of the problem of the Oder-Neisse line or of the division of Germany, would be unstable and precarious unless achieved with the consent of the people involved.

Mr. Winiewicz replied that the US was suffering the disadvantages of such a commitment. De Gaulle had recognized the Oder-Neisse frontier in terms that the Poles accept. This has not prevented the development of good French-German relations. The last war had cost Poland 6 million people. The Maldives with 90 thousand people had been admitted to the United Nations. A country which had lost 6 million people, a number greater than the total population of many members of the UN put together, was not going to sacrifice its frontiers.

The Secretary said with regard to non-proliferation the US was absolutely opposed to giving Germany a national nuclear capability or anything which would give to German authorities the right to order German soldiers to fire nuclear weapons. However, the German position must be understood. The Germans have a natural interest as to what is happening in the nuclear field. There were hundreds of Soviet missiles aimed at Germany. In five or ten minutes they could be incinerated to an ash heap. They say we must know more, we must be partners. The US plan carefully excludes any increase in the number of countries having nuclear capabilities. One nuclear power is bad enough--twenty would be disastrous. We can't move on our non-proliferation treaty because of the Soviet position. When the Soviets say they won't even negotiate because of MLF or ANF, they cannot know what these things are because they have not been worked out in detail. What is clear is that under no conditions would nuclear weapons be given to the Germans and under no conditions would a German government be in a position to give orders to a German soldier to fire nuclear weapons.

The Secretary added that again there was a notable lack of reciprocity in public discussions. NATO nuclear arrangements and plans are openly and freely discussed. We don't know what Soviet nuclear arrangements are. Gromyko refuses to answer any questions on this. Do the Poles have a MLF?

Winiewicz said they did not.

The Secretary said that personally he would be pleased if the Poles, or Hungarians or Czechs had some voice with regard to a Soviet decision to use nuclear weapons. Stalin had been crazy. It would be better if 6 or 7 men shared control rather than have the power of decision in one crazy man.

Mr. Winiewicz said he could not agree that Stalin had been crazy.

The Secretary commented that there had been some high level testimony on the Soviet side that he had been.

Mr. Winiewicz

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Mr. Winiewicz asked whether Gromyko had not now in effect agreed in New York to have his experts discuss our non-proliferation treaty draft with us.

The Secretary said that Gromyko had excepted Articles 1 and 2, which raised the central issue of MLF.

Winiewicz said he hadn't known that Articles 1 and 2 had been excepted from the agreement to discuss. He added that the Poles were not concerned about the US and the UK and the USSR and France having nuclear weapons but they were very much concerned about the Federal Republic. If 20 years after the war, the US could not say what it really believed about the permanency of the Oder-Neisse line, this showed the extent to which the West Germans could dominate policy and suggested the influence they could exert in a MLF.

The Secretary said that we are saying about the Oder-Neisse line just what we had said at Potsdam. He noted that Mr. Winiewicz had still not explained what he meant by the Oder-Neisse as a permanent frontier or between whom it was to be a frontier.

Mr. Winiewicz replied "a frontier between Poland and a German state."

The Secretary commented "Here you lose us."

Mr. Winiewicz said the Poles understood the Germans better than the US. The Germans have one face for the East and one for the West. With regard to non-proliferation, he was sorry that Polish plans had not been looked at more closely as these pointed the way to a solution. The Poles would continue to object to anything which would give the Germans any control of nuclear weapons or any substantial part in the decision to use them. He said he was speaking in very general terms in light of the complexity of the question. The Poles would study, for example, Mr. McNamara's concept of a select committee.

The Secretary said that he would repeat that while it is clear that you believe that our nuclear arrangements are your business, you tell us that your arrangements are none of our business.

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