

May 15, 1944

**Memorandum of Conversations with the Rev.
Stanislaus Orlemanski at Springfield, Massachusetts**

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversations with the Rev. Stanislaus Orlemanski at Springfield, Massachusetts", May 15, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Container 172, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/209830>

Summary:

Dewitt C. Poole summarizes the trip Father Orlemanski to the Soviet Union and his conversations with Joseph Stalin.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

-2-

fully with Stalin but understood Stalin to say that the Curzon line was "imposed on him." Stalin does not want that line but "a Russian Polish boundary line." O. surmises that such a line might assist Vilna and Lodz to Poland. O. is confident in any case that he has opened the way with Stalin and the President Roosevelt, whom Stalin greatly respects and heartily desires to see re-elected, the way direct settlement. O. feels that Great Britain is the disturbing factor.

IV. Father O. is against Professor Osser Lange and Maa. Wanda Waszilewskaya; he is determined to fend against any kind of "socialist" or Russian encroachment upon Poland. Very confidentially, he says, Waszilewskaya is "a bad woman", the phrase apparently being intended politically and not morally. Father O. wants the new Poland to be independent, democratic and "American." He is insistent that President Roosevelt obtain an explicit undertaking from Stalin (in the same way that he, Orlemanski, obtained a signed undertaking on religious matters) that Poland will not ever be absorbed into Russia as "the 10th Soviet Republic." Such an eventuality would make him, Orlemanski, a fool.

V. Father Orlemanski is an amazing combination of provincialism, naivete, honesty, democratic simplicity, insight, determination and force. He appears to have gone to Russia at Stalin's personal wish. O. recounts--it is believed accurately--that Stalin gave between four and five hours of his own time to talking with him. The conversations appear to have been characterized by a simplicity and formality which were as extreme as the formal disparity between an inconspicuous parish priest from Springfield, Massachusetts, and the ruler of a great empire. Orlemanski's bare-knuckled talk must have pleased Stalin. It is difficult to escape the impression that Stalin intended serious commitments respecting both (1) Vatican relations and (2) the Russian-Polish problem. Father Orlemanski's report as set down in the following extended memorandum of conversation calls for close study, and for action perhaps at the highest level.

To fail to make something of the opportunity which appears to present itself might be to miss a fine chance in great matters. It is possible that Stalin was doing little more than amuse himself, but this seems unlikely. Coupled with the unhappy course of Orlemanski's return, a failure to take the priest's report seriously might offend Stalin; it might mean not only an opportunity missed but a set-back to post-war adjustment.

• • •

DECLASSIFIED ~~SECRET~~

-5-

After Father Orlemanski called on Mr. Peole in New York 11 February 1944 (FN B-100, 10 March 1944) and expressed his desire to visit Russia (and received no encouragement) he wrote a letter to Secretary Hull, he said, that was uppermost in his mind was to break "this damned clique." O. is above everything else intensely American; he explained that "clique" meant the Polish Government in London and its following in the United States, and some of the Catholic hierarchy as well, all of whom combine to impose a foreign view of things on Americans who ought to be thinking straight American and to put down any one (like O. himself) who dares speak up against them. So he wrote to Secretary Hull, saying substantially "to hell with these foreigners," but he did not get an answer; and he went to the Soviet Consulate General in New York because "you (Peole) told me I couldn't get there (to Russia) unless they wanted me."

He explained his ideas to Consul General Kissilev and Kissilev said he would inquire of Moscow, but he was dubious. However, O. had not been back in Springfield two hours when the phone rang and there was the Consul General, himself, very surprised, to say that all was arranged. O. understood Stalin had intervened personally with President Roosevelt regarding a passport.

It seemed clear from Father O.'s account that throughout this whole affair his role has been individual. Rather searching queries failed to disclose any special connection between O. and others in the Russian-Polish-American complex or any clue as to how Marshal Stalin came to be informed about O. and ready to deal with him in so important a way.

O. divulged, with characteristic forthrightness, his dislike of Professor Oscar Lange. He did not know how Lange got to Moscow, but when O. arrived at the Intourist hotel there was Lange--two big rooms and Lange talking to the press, when all ought to have been kept secret. Lange was in any case uncongenial to O. because Lange was a Socialist--no one for a priest to have anything to do with; and here in Moscow he was entertaining people right and left at the Intourist hotel, and all at Stalin's expense. He, Orlemanski, did not want a large room but a small one; and when Stalin got the bill he didn't want him to say: "well, these guests of mine certainly had big stomachs!"

O. met promptly with Melotov but was insistent on seeing Stalin in accordance with his stipulation when originally undertaking the trip. There were two meetings with Stalin, O.

recounted

DECLASSIFIED SECRET

-4-

recounted, each of two to two and a half hours. Malotov was present on both occasions but said little. O. speaks English. There was a very clever interpreter. O. occasionally understood Stalin's Russian. O.'s account was not sufficiently organized to make it possible to distinguish between the two meetings, and in this memorandum the two meetings are, of necessity, treated practically as one.

As soon as O. heard I was going to call on him in Springfield he typed out a summary of his message. The attached photostatic copy (Annex I) will prove it to be a bit of a task always to get at Father O.'s exact meaning. However, I went over the paper with him carefully and believe that I understood what he wished to convey.

Though it appears as heading No. 3 in O.'s memo to me, the question of religion was, I gathered, first on the docket at Moscow. Foremost in O.'s mind was his wish to obtain safeguards for Catholicism in Poland, White Russia and the Ukraine. He said to me that he did not think beyond those territories, but Stalin swept aside the idea of geographical limitation and answered O. without restriction.

O. told his story mostly in direct discourse. The following may not be verbally exact, but it reflects accurately the substance and the spirit of what O. recounted.

"Tell me, Stalin, why did you persecute religion and the church?"

"Well, Father, what in hell would you have done in my case?"

"Yes, I probably would have done about the same, but I don't want you to go on doing it any more."

"Right," answered Stalin, "some of my best subjects are Christians."

"That makes sense," O. rejoined. "You know Christ told us to be as wise as serpents."

Thereupon Stalin pronounced an extended eulogium on Christ, remarking upon the greatness of His spirit and His transcendent wisdom.

O. then voiced his gratification, but said:

"You

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

-5-

"You know, Stalin, some people say you don't always keep your promises!"

"What promises have I ever broken?"

"Well, it wouldn't do for me to specify, but I want something signed."

"All right, what are your questions, and I'll answer them and sign it."

Father O. no longer has the signed papers Stalin gave him. He does not even have copies, he said. Soon after O.'s return to Springfield the originals were mailed directly to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington. One of O.'s two sisters, who keep house for him, put them in an envelope, dropped them in the box and bethought herself later that she ought to have registered them.

This was told to me by the Rev. George A. Shea, chancellor of the diocese. Father Shea added (we were talking on the evening of 18 May) that an acknowledgment had reached the Bishop from the Apostolic Delegate and he (Father Shea) had carried the word to O.'s sister. O. told me the next day that he had been assured that the papers would be forwarded to the Holy Father. The Apostolic Delegate had also sent him, Father O. said, warm regards and congratulations.

Father Shea had intimated the evening before that Father O. had been disciplined only because the priests in the diocese would not understand it otherwise, and the suspension would soon be lifted. The Bishop was to talk the next day with Father O.'s two brothers, who are also priests.

O. explained to me that the papers bearing Stalin's signature which had been sent to the Apostolic Delegate were those which he had given to the press in Chicago. The AP and Aome had both photographed them. They would soon be appearing in the news reels.

In Moscow O. had assured Stalin the papers would reach the Vatican.

"Now, Stalin," he said, "they (the Vatican) will ask for concessions. Maybe small concessions. Maybe big ones. You give them what they ask."

"All right," answered Stalin, "I will."

* * *

-6- ~~DECLASSIFIED SECRET~~

When I talked with Father Orlemanski in Springfield yesterday he was in the highest spirits. The nervous collisions reported in the newspapers had been almost altogether "diplomatic." What there really was of fatigue and shock had been wiped out by the good wishes and congratulations of the Apostolic Delegate and reconciliation, just effected, with the Bishop. O. was delighted, moreover, to talk with some one whom he knew to be from the Government.

Meaningfully he told about Stalin's democratic ways. "You know," he said, "Stalin even asked if he could smoke a cigarette while I was there."

"Sure," I answered, "but look at your cigarettes, they're just paper half way along. Our cigarettes in America are tobacco all the way to the end."

"That's because you've got lots of money," Stalin answered. "We'll have it that way in Russia some day."

The conversation passing to a government for Poland, O. said he was against the Government in London. No recognition of that Government for him. Stalin demurred:

"But, Father, there are good men in the Government in London, with a few exceptions."

O. obtained the impression that Stalin felt that he (Stalin) and the Governments in London and Washington could readily agree on a new Polish government. According to O.'s understanding of Stalin's idea, this new government would be composed of three elements, viz. --

(1) Acceptable personalities from the existing Government in London. O. did not know to whom precisely Stalin objected but thought it was probably Sosnkowski and Radkiewicz. Was Mikolajczyk mentioned? No.

(2) Leaders from the Polish Patriots to be chosen in Poland. O. dislikes Wanda Wassilewskaya as much as he does Lange. "She's a bad woman," he remarked, referring, it seemed, to her political and not her moral character. Probably, he said, Stalin would want her in the new Polish government, but she could be "in a back seat."

However, Father O. is convinced that Stalin does not propose to inject Russian or Communistic elements into the new government. Stalin, O. reported, said nothing about

representatives

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

-7-

representatives of his own, and G. thinks it to be his idea to have the government really Polish and responsive to the wishes of the people of Poland.

(3) Some leading Polish Americans. In response to Stalin's inquiry about possible participants of this type G. mentioned Dean Francis X. Siewlik and also Charles J. Kosmarek; John Olejnik, head of the Polish Roman Catholic Union; and Honorata Walowka, head of the Polish Women's Alliance. Stalin was able to distinguish at once between Siewlik and Kosmarek, and said the former might be all right. Following a little pressure on my part, it came out that Stalin wished Father Orlemanski to participate in the new government and for a while at least to live in Poland. G.'s response, however, was emphatically negative. He was American and proposed to stay in America and to carry on with his priestly duties.

(You know, G. interjected--this was one of innumerable parentheses--we've got fine barracks up in Fairbanks. "When I got there coming back, I went into the lavatory, and, Christ, it was fine. You could really wash your face. Over in Russia just a dab--gesticulations--but when we got to Fairbanks--No, I'm going to stay in the United States".)

The Polish-Americans who would participate in the new Polish government should be picked by President Roosevelt, according to G.'s report of Stalin's plan, and Orlemanski should help the President and give his approval. As a bit of provocation, I voiced the opinion that participation by American citizens in a Polish government would be entirely inappropriate. Father Orlemanski seized my hand.

"Shake hands," he exclaimed. "You're right! That's just what I told Stalin, but Stalin insisted. I said we Americans ought to stick to relief. That is what we ought to do--help the women and children and keep out of politics."

* * *

When it came to the chapter on boundaries, Father Orlemanski was not quite so clear cut and emphatic in his report as with respect to other parts of his talks with Marshal Stalin. He seemed to feel the ground uncertain. What happened at Teheran was involved and Stalin's personal relations with President Roosevelt and apparently some mis-giving or distrust respecting the British.

The

~~DECLASSIFIED SECRET~~

The Western boundaries of Poland O. discussed very briefly. Moscow and the new Government of Poland could decide about that. It seemed not to be a matter of much interest to him.

As for the Curson line, however, that line he reported Stalin felt to have been "imposed on him." Some pressing on my part followed but produced no more than vague intimations that this had happened maybe at Teheran and the British were involved.

What Stalin said he wanted, O. asserted unequivocally, was "a Russian-Polish boundary line"--but what precisely that might mean - beyond the idea of Russian-Polish agreement - he had not had time to find out, but he seemed to have caught the idea that Stalin actually wanted less than the Curson line and might very well yield Wilno and Lwow to the new Poland.

However, one point was entirely clear and emphatic. That was Stalin's great liking and admiration for President Roosevelt. "There," exclaimed Stalin to Orlemanski, "is a good man. We must get him re-elected."

"He will be re-elected," answered O.

O. had no doubt that a simple inquiry by President Roosevelt would elicit from Marshal Stalin all the latter's ideas on the boundary question and that the two statesmen could quickly come to some good solution. There was still the question of how England might feel about it.

* * *

The fourth main point which Father Orlemanski wanted to impress on me may at first strike the reader as inconsistent. He wanted an assurance from President Roosevelt that he would not permit Marshal Stalin to incorporate Poland as "a 19th republic" in the USSR. Beyond the problem of religious tolerance, which Father O. feels he has now put in the hands of the Vatican already pretty well settled, the object of Father Orlemanski's missionary zeal and two-fisted drive is the realization of an American-style Poland with all that implies not only in the way of internal reform but external independence and self-respect as well. Should his great adventure and near-martyrdom and straight-from-the-shoulder talking with Stalin end up simply in Poland's being swallowed, all would have been for nought and he himself would be an unutterable fool.

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

-9-

So complete is his confidence in President Roosevelt that an assurance from that high quarter would resolve the last drops of uncertainty which must apparently linger still when a priest (still touched with a trace of peasant shrewdness) deals with a Communist, even if the latter proves himself to be splendidly democratic, well disposed and reasonable. As I understand him, O. would not want to go ahead with what he conceives to be his part in the formation of a new Polish government unless fortified by the President's backing. That is what he means, I take it, by writing in his memo to me (Annex I)--"unless I get this I will refuse to speak."

No doubt whatever of Stalin or the Soviet Government was directly expressed by Father Orlemanski beyond the intimation contained in this desire for some re-insurance from President Roosevelt. Stalin, he said, assured him that he (Stalin) wanted to have along side of Russia a strong, prosperous and happy Poland. This Poland need not be Soviet or Communist. It should be democratic and whatever the people of Poland wanted it to be.

Father O. repeated these assurances by Marshal Stalin without the slightest tone of misgiving or distrust. He was reassured also, he said, by a talk he had with the Polish leader, Andrzej Witos, and a signed paper Witos handed him. A photostatic copy of this paper (in Polish) is attached as Annex II. It is a restatement on Witos' part of Stalin's assurances respecting a free, independent and democratic Poland.

(According to the information at the disposal of this Branch, Andrzej Witos is a brother of Wincenty Witos, leader of the Peasant Party in Poland and one time Prime Minister of Poland. Andrzej Witos was once in the supreme council of the Peasant Party in Poland and represented it in the Sejm, but was then expelled for supporting Pilsudski. There seems to have been some question of venality also.)

Father O. likewise supplied to his interviewer a memorial which was handed to him at the front by Polish soldiers testifying to the fact that the Poles were fighting with the Russians against the Germans. Photostatic copy is attached as Annex III.

* * *

It was between his two talks with Stalin that Father Orlemanski visited the Polish armed forces. He had expressed

the

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

-10-

the wish to go to a front which I was unable to identify, but Stalin said that was too dangerous for a priest. There were parachuteists and partisans and what not. "General Valutin wasn't killed, he was murdered," Father Orszanski relayed to me from Stalin. So Father O. went to Sumy. He had hoped to stop in Kharkov on the way and see that city, but during the night his special car was switched to a special train and on the morning of 1 May he found himself in Sumy.

(It was during the second talk with Stalin, Father O. interjected at this point, that he found out how simple and retiring a fellow Stalin really was. O. and Molotov and the interpreter were in a conference room at the Kremlin. Stalin strolled in quietly and sort of hung around the back of the room as if he was not really wanted. Seeing this, O. turned and said: "Now you come here, Stalin, and sit beside me. I'm hard of hearing, you know, and I want you close to me." Stalin seemed quite pleased, O. related, and came and sat down beside him in the best of good humor.)

It was 1 May, then, at Sumy and 1 May was the Soviet Russian holiday, and Stalin, who remembered everything, had a lot of children waving red flags, and so on, come to see O., and it was all very nice, but the Polish holiday was 3 May and it was on that day that O. wanted to talk to the Polish troops, but he couldn't stay that long because he had to get back to Moscow. So 1 May was celebrated in the Russian way, and O. said he would talk to the Polish troops 2 May and the next day the Poles could celebrate by themselves in their own way.

So 2 May Father O. addressed the Polish troops and they made a good impression on him. Eight thousand recruits had come in recently from Tarnopol and thereabouts. He had heard stories the Russians were forcing the Poles but there were these 8,000. And General Berling made a good impression; he was O.K.

Father O. said he always traveled as a priest with his "Roman collar" on and he had his black gown (cassock) with him, which was fortunate because if he hadn't had that the Poles probably wouldn't have thought he was a priest. Did he just deliver an address to the Polish soldiers, I asked, or did he also talk with some of them individually? No, he just delivered an address (in Polish). There wasn't time for individual talks; he had to get back to Moscow.

* * *

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

-11-

Early in his visit in Moscow Father O. said he had a talk with Mr. Hamilton at the Embassy--the Ambassador was away--and also with the Consul--Mr. Johnson, he thought the name was. He did not have a chance to say good-bye before he left.

On the plane going back there were three Russians and a Major G. J. Okulitch, in British uniform with "Canada" on his shoulder. Okulitch continued with him as far as Edmonton. The Russians left him at Fairbanks. He understood, of course, who the Russians were and what they were doing. They were all rather puzzled, however, by Major Okulitch; probably he was a British spy, Father O. remarked to me.

O. seemed genuinely upset by the publicity his trip had occasioned. He had wanted it to be secret. Probably that fellow Lange was at fault. Still the assault by newspaper men in Chicago was not (it seemed to the writer of this memo) altogether displeasing to a very human human being vividly conscious of playing a role in decisive events. It would all be out in the newsreels, Father O. remarked, and later on he might write a book.

But it would be a complete mistake to write Father Orlemanski off as a stunter. If we are on the threshold of the age of the common man, Father Orlemanski is the common man at a high level. He is the up-from-the-ranks, immigrant-child American at a high level. If he is provincial and naive, he is also shrewd and full of Christian purpose, honesty, courage and the most convinced Americanism. It is my impression that Stalin recognized these qualities and therefore accepted O. as a man worth dealing with.

Father O. appears to have confidence in the writer of this memo, to whom he first talked about going to Russia last February and who then discouraged him. Father O. volunteered an informal undertaking not to do anything further at least until we should talk again. He agreed that further publicity was very undesirable, but of course some one may get at him.

If officers of the State Department or others in authority are interested in talking with Father O. I can arrange a discreet meeting in New York or Washington. New York would be better. Father O. will not travel without his "Roman collar."

Obviously Father O. hopes to hear something from me fairly soon. He has definitely in mind that something ought

to

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

-12-

to be released to the public soon on Stalin's readiness to accept a Polish government of the sort indicated above. It will be recalled that he promised this to the public in his Chicago interview.

Dewitt G. Poole

17 May 1944

COPY [] [] [] [] SECRET [] [] [] [] MOST SECRET

Memorandum of Conversations with the Rev. Stanislaus Orlemanski (and incidentally the Rev. George A. Shea, Chancellor of the Diocese) at Springfield, Massachusetts, 15 and 16 May 1944.

SUMMARY

I. Original copies of signed undertakings by Stalin respecting non-persecution of religion and freedom of [sic] worship have been sent to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, who has acknowledged their receipt through the Bishop at Springfield and indicated that these papers (of which translations have already been published in the newspapers) are being sent on to the Holy Father at Rome. The Apostolic Delegate has conveyed best wishes and congratulations to Father Orlemanski. It is possible that the way has been opened for an understanding and adjustment between the Kremlin and the Vatican.

II. Stalin told Father Orlemanski he desired to bring about the formation of a new Polish Government composed of three elements, namely: (1) unobjectionable members of the present Government in London, (2) leaders from among the Polish Patriots in Poland, (3) representative Polish Americans to be selected by President Roosevelt with the concurrence of Father Orlemanski. Father O. agreed heartily with a suggestion by his interlocutor that inclusion of American citizens would be inappropriate; he had remarked as much to Stalin, he said. Orlemanski thought the role of Americans should be limited to relief. In talking with Stalin O. had discussed the London Government in its entirety as unacceptable. Stalin demurred, saying there were some good men there; he objected to only a few. These were not specified but O. believes those most objectionable to Stalin to be Sosnkowski and Raczkiewicz. The name of Mikolajczyk was not mentioned.

□

□O. is convinced the way is open for President Roosevelt to obtain Stalin's cordial agreement to a new Polish Government which will be truly Polish and representative and not Russian or Communist. He believes the boundary dispute can be settled at the same time.

III. Stalin appears to have talked freely to O. about boundaries, adverting to discussions on that subject at Teheran. O. did "not have time" to elucidate the matter fully

□□□□□□□□[Embassy has copy]

Fully [sic] with Stalin but understood Stalin to say that the Curzon line was "imposed on him." Stalin does not want that line but "a Russian Polish boundary line." O. surmises that such a line might accord Wilno and Lwow to Poland. O. is confident in any case that he has opened the way with Stalin and that President Roosevelt, whom Stalin greatly likes and heartily desires to see re-elected, can soon effect a settlement. O. feels that Great Britain is the disturbing factor.

IV. Father O. is against Professor Oscar Lange and Mme. Wanda Wassilewskaya; he is determined to fend against any kind of "socialist" or Russian encroachment upon Poland. Very confidentially, he says, Wassilewskaya is "a bad woman" -the phrase apparently being intended politically and not morally. Father O. wants the new Poland to be independent, democratic, and "American." He is insistent that President Roosevelt obtain an explicit undertaking from Stalin (in the same way that he, Orlemanski, obtained a signed undertaking on religious matters) that Poland will not ever be absorbed into Russia as "the 19th Soviet Republic." Such an eventuality would make him, Orlemanski, a fool.

V. Father Orlemanski is an amazing combination of provincialism, naivete, honesty, democratic simplicity, insight, determination and force. He appears to have gone to Russia at Stalin's personal wish. O. recounts -it is believed accurately -that Stalin gave between four and five hours of his own time to talking with him. The conversations appear to have been characterized by a simplicity and forthrightness which were as extreme as the formal disparity between an inconspicuous parish priest from Springfield, Massachusetts, and the ruler of a great empire. Orlemanski's bare-knuckled talk must have pleased Stalin. It is difficult to escape the impression that Stalin intended serious commitments respecting both (1) Vatican relations and (2) the Russian-Polish problem. Father Orlemanski's report as set down in the following extended memorandum of conversation calls for close study, and for action perhaps at the highest level.

□To fail to make something of the opportunity which appears to present itself might be to miss a fine chance in great matters. It is possible that Stalin was doing little more than amuse himself, but this seems unlikely. Coupled with the unhappy course of Orlemanski's return, a failure to take the priest's report seriously might offend Stalin; it might mean not only an opportunity missed but a set-back to post-war adjustment.

□After Father Orlemanski called on Mr. Poole in New York 11 February 1944 (FN B-166, 10 March 1944) and expressed his desire to visit Russia (and received no encouragement) he wrote a letter to Secretary Hull, he said. What was uppermost in his mind was to break "this damned clique." O. is above everything else intensely American; he explained that "clique" meant the Polish Government in London and its following in the United States, and some of the Catholic hierarchy as well, all of whom combine to impose a foreign view of things on Americans who ought to be thinking straight American and to put down any one (like O. himself) who dares speak up against them. So he wrote to Secretary Hull, saying substantially "to hell with these foreigners," but he did not get an answer; and he went to the Soviet Consulate General in New York because "you (Poole) told me I couldn't get there (to Russia) unless they wanted me."

□He explained his ideas to Consul General Kissilev and Kissilev said he would inquire of Moscow, but he was dubious. However, O. had not been back in Springfield two hours when the phone rang and there was the Consul General, himself very surprised, to say that all was arranged. O. understood Stalin had intervened personally with President Roosevelt regarding a passport.

□It seemed clear from Father O.'s account that throughout this whole affair his role has been individual. Rather searching queries failed to disclose any special connection between O. and others in the Russian-Polish-American complex or any clue as to how Marshal Stalin came to be informed about O. and ready to deal with him in so important a way.

□O. divulged, with characteristic forthrightness, his dislike of Professor Oscar Lange. He did not know how Lange got to Moscow, but when O. arrived at the Intourist Hotel there was Lange -two big rooms and Lange talking to the Press, when all ought to have been kept secret. Lange was in any case uncongenial to O. because Lange was a Socialist -no one a priest would have anything to do with; and here in Moscow he was entertaining people right and left at the Intourist hotel, and all at Stalin's expense. He, Orlemanski, did not want a large room but a small one; and when Stalin got the bill he didn't want him to say: "Well, these guests of mine certainly had big stomachs!"

□O. met promptly with Molotov but was insistent on seeing Stalin in accordance with his stipulation when originally undertaking the trip. There were two meetings with

Stalin, O. recounted, each of two to two and a half hours. Molotov was present on both occasions but said little. O. spoke English. There was a very clever interpreter. O. occasionally understood Stalin's Russian. O.'s account was not sufficiently organized to make it possible to distinguish between the two meetings, and in this memorandum the two meetings are, of necessity, treated practically as one.

□As soon as O. heard I was going to call on him in Springfield he typed out a summary of his message. The attached photostatic copy (Annex I) will prove it to be a bit of a task always to get at Father O.'s exact meaning. However, I went over the paper with him carefully and believe that I understood what he wished to convey.

□

□Though it appears as heading No. 3 in O.'s memo to me, the question of religion was, I gathered, first on the docket at Moscow. Foremost in O.'s mind was his wish to obtain safeguards for Catholicism in Poland, White Russia and the Ukraine. He said to me that he did not think beyond those territories, but Stalin swept aside the idea of geographical limitation and answered O. without restriction.

□O. told his story mostly in direct discourse. The following may not be verbally exact, but it reflects accurately the substance and the spirit of what O. recounted.

□"Tell me, Stalin, why did you persecute religion and the church?"

□"Well, Father, what in hell would you have done in my case?"

□"Yes, I probably would have done about the same, but I don't want you to go on doing it any more."

□"Right," answered Stalin, "some of my best subjects are Christians."

□"That makes sense," O. rejoined. "You know Christ told us to be as wise as serpents."

□Thereupon Stalin pronounced an extended eulogium on Christ, remarking upon the greatness of His spirit and His transcendant [sic] wisdom.

□O. then voiced his gratification, but said:

□

□"You know, Stalin, some people say you don't always keep your promises!"

□"What promises have I ever broken?"

□"Well, it wouldn't do for me to specify, but I want something signed."

□"All right, what are your questions, and I'll answer them and sign it."

□Father O. no longer has the signed papers Stalin gave him. He does not even have copies, he said. Soon after O.'S return to Springfield the originals were mailed directly to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington. One of O.'s two sisters, who keep house for him, put them in an envelope, dropped them in the box and bethought herself later that she ought to have registered them.

□This was told to me by the Rev. George A. Shea, chancellor of the diocese. Father Shea added (we were talking on the evening of 15 May) that an acknowledgment had reached the Bishop from the Apostolic Delegate and he (Father Shea) had carried the

word to O.'s sister. O. told me the next day that he had been assured that the papers would be forwarded to the Holy Father. The Apostolic Delegate had also sent him, Father O. said, warm regards and congratulations.

□ Father Shea had intimated the evening before that Father O. had been disciplined only because the priests in the diocese would not understand it otherwise, and the suspension would soon be lifted. The Bishop was to talk the next day with Father O.'s two brothers, who are also priests.

□ O. explained to me that the papers bearing Stalin's signature which had been sent to the Apostolic Delegate were those which he had given to the press in Chicago. The AP and Acme had both photographed them. They would soon be appearing in the news reels.

□ In Moscow O. had assured Stalin the papers would reach the Vatican.

□ "Now, Stalin," he said, "they (the Vatican) will ask for concessions. Maybe small concessions. Maybe big ones. You give them what they ask."

□ "All right," answered Stalin, "I will."

□

□ When I talked with Father Orlemanski in Springfield yesterday he was in the highest spirits. The nervous collapse reported in the newspapers had been almost altogether "diplomatic." What there really was of fatigue and shock had been wiped out by the good wishes and congratulations of the Apostolic Delegate and reconciliation, just effected, with the Bishop. O. was delighted. Moreover, to talk with some one who he knew to be from the Government.

□ Beamingly he told about Stalin's democratic ways. "You know," he said, "Stalin even asked if he could smoke a cigarette while I was there."

□ "Sure," I answered, "but look at your cigarettes, they're just paper half way along. Our cigarettes in America are tobacco all the way to the end."

□ "That's because you've got lots of money," Stalin answered. "We'll have it that way in Russia some day."

□ The conversation passing to a government for Poland, O. said he was against the Government in London. No recognition of that Government for him. Stalin demurred:

□ "But, Father, there are good men in the Government in London, with a few exceptions."

□ O. obtained the impression that Stalin felt that he (Stalin) and the Governments in London and Washington could readily agree on a new Polish government. According to O.'s understanding of Stalin's idea, this new government would be composed of three elements, viz. --

□ Acceptable personalities from the existing Government in London. O. did not know to whom precisely Stalin objected but thought it was probably Sosnkowski and Raczkiewicz. Was Mikolajczyk mentioned? No.

□

□ Leaders from the Polish Patriots to be chosen in Poland. O. dislikes Wanda

Wassilewskaya, referring, it seemed, to her political and not her moral character. Probably, he said, Stalin would want her in the new Polish government, but she could be "in a back seat."

□□

□ Russian or Communistic elements into the new government. Stalin, O. reported, said nothing about representatives of his own, and O. thinks it to be his idea to have the government really Polish and responsive to the wishes of the people of Poland.

□

□□□

Some leading Polish Americans. In response to Stalin's inquiry about possible participants of this type O. mentioned Dean Francis X. Swietlik and also Charles I. Rozmarek; John Olejniozak, head of the Polish Roman Catholic Union; and Honorata Wolowska, head of the Polish Women's Alliance. Stalin was more able to distinguish at once between Swietlik and Rozmarek, and said the former might be all right. Following a little pressure on my part, it came out that Stalin wished Father Orlemanski to participate in the new government and for a while at least to live in Poland. O.'s response, however, was emphatically negative. He was American and proposed to stay in America and to carry on with his priestly duties.

□□

□ (You know, O. interjected -this was one of innumerable [sic] parentheses -we've got fine barracks up in Fairbanks. "When I got there coming back, I went into the lavatory, and, Christ, it was fine. You could really wash your face. Over in Russia just a dab -gestiouletions -but when we got to Fairbanks -No, I'm going to stay in the United States".)

□ The Polish-Americans who would participate in the new Polish government should be picked by President Roosevelt, according to O.'s report of Stalin's plan, and Orlemanski should help the President and give his approval. As a bit of provocation, I voiced the opinion that participation by American citizens in a Polish government would be entirely inappropriate. Father Orlemanski seized my hand.

□ "Shake hands," he exclaimed. "You're right! That's just what I told Stalin, but Stalin insisted. I said we Americans ought to stick to relief. That is what we ought to do -help the women and children and keep out of politics."

□ When it came to the chapter on boundaries, Father Orlemanski was not quite so clear out and emphatic in his report as with respect to other parts of his talks with Marshal Stalin. He seemed to feel the ground uncertain. What happened at Teheran was involved and Stalin's personal relations with President Roosevelt and apparently some misgiving or distrust respecting the British.

□ The Western boundaries of Poland O. dismissed very briefly. Moscow and the new Government of Poland could decide about that. It seemed not to be a matter of much interest to him.

□ As for the Curzon line, however, that line he reported Stalin felt to have been "imposed on him." Some pressing on my part followed but produced no more than vague intimations that this had happened maybe at Teheran and the British were involved.

□ What Stalin said he wanted, O. asserted unequivocally, was "a Russian-Polish boundary line" -but what precisely that might mean - beyond the idea of

Russian-Polish agreement -he had not had time to find out, but he seemed to have caught the idea that Stalin actually wanted less than the Curzon line and might very well yield Wilno and Lwow to the new Poland.

□However, one point was entirely clear and emphatic. That was Stalin's great liking and admiration for President Roosevelt. "There," exclaimed Stalin to Orlemanski, "is a good man. We must get him re-elected."

□"He will be re-elected," answered O.

□O. had no doubt that a simple inquiry by President Roosevelt would elicit from Marshal Stalin all the latter's ideas on the boundary question and that the two statesmen could quickly come to some good solution. There was still the question of how England might feel about it.□

□The fourth main point which Father Orlemanski wanted to impress on me may at first strike the reader as inconsistent. He wanted an assurance from President Roosevelt that he would not permit Marshal Stalin to incorporate Poland as "a 19th republic" in the USSR. Beyond the problem of religious tolerance, which Father O. feels he has now put in the hands of the Vatican already pretty well settled, the object of Father Orlemanski's missionary zeal and two-fisted drive is the realization of an American-style Poland with all that implies not only in the way of internal reform but external independence and self-respect as well. Should his great adventure and near-martyrdom and straight-from-the-shoulder talking with Stalin end up simply in Poland's being swallowed, all would have been for naught and he himself would be an unutterable fool.

□So complete is his confidence in President Roosevelt that an assurance from that high quarter would resolve the last dregs of uncertainty which must apparently linger still when a priest (still touched with a trace of peasant shrewdness) deals with a Communist, even if the latter proves himself to be splendidly democratic, well disposed and reasonable. As I understand him, O. would not want to go ahead with what he conceives to be his part in the formation of a new Polish government unless fortified by the President's backing. That is what he means, I take it, by writing in his memo to me (Annex I) -"unless I get this I will refuse to speak."

□No doubt whatever of Stalin or the Soviet Government was directly expressed by Father Orlemanski beyond the intimation contained in this desire for some re-insurance from President Roosevelt. Stalin, he said, assured him that he (Stalin) wanted to have along side of Russia a strong, prosperous and happy Poland. This Poland need not be Soviet or Communist. It should be democratic and whatever the people of Poland wanted it to be.

□Father O. repeated these assurances by Marshal Stalin without the slightest tone of misgiving or distrust. He was reassured also, he said, by a talk he had with the Polish leader, Andrzej Witos, and a signed paper Witos handed him. A photostatic copy of this paper (in Polish) is attached as Annex II. It is a restatement on Witos' part of Stalin's assurances respecting a free, independent and democratic Poland.

□(According to the information at the disposal of this Branch, Andrzej Witos is a brother of Wincenty Witos, leader of the Peasant Party in Poland and one time Prime Minister of Poland. Andrzej Witos was once in the supreme council of the Peasant Party in Poland and represented it in the Sejm, but was then expelled for supporting Pilsudski. There seems to have been some question of Venality also.)

□Father O. likewise supplied to his interviewer a memorial which was handed to him at the front by Polish soldiers testifying to the fact that they Poles were fighting with the Russians against the Germans. Photostatic copy is attached as Annex III.

□It was between his two talks with Stalin that Father Orlemanski visited the Polish armed forces. He had expressed the wish to go to a front which I was unable to identify, but Stalin said that was too dangerous for a priest. There were parachutists and partisans and what not. "General Valutin wasn't killed, he was murdered," Father Orlemanski relayed to me from Stalin. So Father O. went to Sumy. He had hoped to stop in Kharkov on the way and see that city, but during the night his special car was switched to a special train and on the morning of 1 May he found himself in Sumy.

□(It was during the second talk with Stalin, Father O. interjected at this point, that he found out how simple and retiring a fellow Stalin really was. O. and Molotov and the interpreter were in a conference room at the Kremlin. Stalin strolled in quietly and sort of hung around the back of the room as if he was not really wanted. Seeing this, O. turned and said: "Now you come here, Stalin, and sit beside me. I'm hard of hearing, you know, and I want you close to me." Stalin seemed quite pleased, O. related, and came and sat down beside him in the best of good humor.)

□It was 1 May, then, at Sumy and 1 May was the Soviet Russian holiday, and Stalin, who remembered everything, had a lot of children waving red flags, and so on, come to see O., and it was on that day that O. wanted to talk to the Polish troops, but he couldn't stay that long because he had to get back to Moscow. So 1 May was celebrated in the Russian way, and O. said he would talk to the Polish troops 2 May and the next day the Poles could celebrate by themselves in their own way.

□So 2 May Father O. addressed the Polish troops and they made a good impression on him. Eight thousand recruits had come in recently from Tarnopol and thereabouts. He had heard stories the Russians were forcing the Poles but there were these 8,000. And General Berling made a good impression; he was O.K.

□Father O. said he always traveled as a priest with his "Roman collar" on and he had his black gown (cassock) with him, which was fortunate because if he hadn't had that the Poles probably wouldn't have thought he was a priest. Did he just deliver as address to the Polish soldiers, I asked, or did he also talk with some of the individually? No, he just delivered as address (in Polish). There wasn't time for individual talks; he has to get back to Moscow.

□Early in his visit in Moscow Father O. said he has a talk with Mr. Hamilton at the Embassy -the Ambassador was away -and also with the Consul -Mr. Johnson, he thought the name was. He did not have a chance to say good-bye before he left.

□On the plane going back there were three Russians and a Major G. J. Okulitch, in British uniform with "Canada" on his shoulder. Okulitch continued with him as far as Edmonton. The Russians left him at Fairbanks. He understood, of course, who the Russians were and what they were doing. They were all rather puzzled, however, by Major Okulitch; probably he was a British spy, Father O. remarked to me.

□O. seemed genuinely upset by the publicity his trip had occasioned. He had wanted it to be secret. Probably that fellow Lange was at fault. Still the assault by newspaper men in Chicago was not (it seemed to the writer of this memo) altogether displeasing

to a very human human [sic] being vividly conscious of playing a role in decisive events. It would all be out in the newsreels, Father O. remarked, and later on he might write a book.

□But it would be a complete mistake to write Father Orlemanski off as a stunter. If we are on the threshold of the age of the common man, Father Orlemanski is the common man at a high level. He is the up-from-the-ranks, immigrants' child American at a high level. If he is provincial and naïve, he is also shrewd and full of Christian purpose, honesty, courage and the most convinced Americanism. It is my impression that Stalin recognized these qualities and therefore accepted O. as a man worth dealing with.

□Father O. appears to have confidence in the writer of this memo, to whom he first talked about going to Russia last February and who then discouraged him. Father O. volunteered an informal undertaking not to do anything further at least until we should talk again. He agreed that further publicity was very undesirable, but of course some one may get at him.

□If officers of the State Department or others in authority are interested in talking with Father O. I can arrange a discreet meeting in New York or Washington. New York would be better. Father O. will not travel without his "Roman collar."

□Obviously Father O. hopes to hear something from me fairly soon. He has definitely in mind that something ought to be released to the public soon on Stalin's readiness to accept a Polish government of the sort indicated above. It will be recalled that he promised this to the public in this Chicago interview.

DeWitt C. Poole

17 May 1944