

May 17, 1944

**Professor Oscar Lange's Report on his Meeting with
Stalin, Submitted to President Roosevelt and
Secretary of State Stettinius**

Citation:

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Summary:

Prof. Oscar Lange sends a briefing to the President and Secretary of State about his meeting with Stalin where they discussed Polish Politics.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

PSF-66

PSF. Orlemanski-Lange folder

4-44

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 15, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES:

Professor Oscar Lange telephoned Mr. Early requesting an appointment in order to present to him a report on his trip to Russia. After checking with Mr. C. E. Bohlen of the State Department, it was decided that I should receive him and accept his report along the lines set forth in my June 15th letter to the Professor.

I find that the report is a copy of the report which Professor Lange delivered to the Secretary of State through Mr. Stettinius. The Professor seemed happy at being received in the White House, and I think that this will close the matter. I have notified Mr. Bohlen of the contents of the report left with me.

T. D. S.
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June 15, 1944

Dear Professor Lange:

This will acknowledge receipt from you of a copy of the Report on your recent visit to Russia, the original of which has been submitted to the Secretary of State, through the Under Secretary of State, Mr. Stettinius.

As you state in your covering memorandum to the President, this Report is submitted on your own initiative, and in your capacity as a private American citizen who is anxious to present his views on his own visit to Russia.

Very sincerely yours,

THOMAS D. BLAKE
Assistant to MR. EARLY

Professor Oscar Lange,
Department of Economics,
University of Chicago,
Chicago, Illinois.

TDB:mtl

The University of Chicago

Department of Economics

CHICAGO 37, ILLINOIS

June 12, 1944

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I take the liberty of enclosing a copy of a report which I have submitted to the Secretary of State.

The report concerns my trip to the U.S.S.R., during which I visited the Union of Polish Patriots and the Polish Army.

I am submitting this report on my own initiative.

Most respectfully,

Oscar Lange

Oscar Lange

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Enclosure

MAY 17. CONFERENCE WITH MARSHAL STALIN AND MR. MOLOTOV.
Length, 2 hours, 20 minutes. Language, Russian. Also present,
Mr. Pavlov, who took notes of the conversation.

Marshal Stalin started by asking me my impressions of the Polish army. I told him what I had seen and heard, and observed that the ideas of the soldiers and officers were more radical than those of the members of the Union of Polish Patriots. I pointed out that whereas the overwhelming majority of the soldiers are for nationalization of big industries and banking, the Union of Polish Patriots holds back on this point. I mentioned that, in particular, the Polish Communists are now the right wing of the Union of Polish Patriots (2) (as compared with the Socialists and the Peasant Party), and that they object to the demand for nationalization of big industries because they think this would undermine national unity. Stalin smiled and said, "That's because I've bawled them out." He added that he is very gratified to know that there is considerable demand for nationalization of big industries, and that he thinks that is very beneficial because it will serve to strengthen the power of the Polish government by providing it with a source of income independent of taxation. If the Polish people want to nationalize their big industries, it's their business, but the Soviet Union refuses to put any pressure in this direction; on the contrary, it will lean backward. I observed that I had the impression that he underestimates the radicalism of the Polish people, and that the social composition of the Polish army in the U.S.S.R. is not representative. It consists largely of government settlers and wealthier peasants. Once Poland is liberated, the Polish working class and the landless proletariat as well as the poorer peasants will become vocal. Stalin replied that he thinks the German occupation has destroyed class lines, particularly between poor and wealthy peasants. The reaction of the different social strata will be rather uniform.

I pointed out that the soldiers in the Polish army complain very bitterly about the condition of their relatives in the interior of the Soviet Union. I told him that I consider the dissatisfaction to be reaching a crisis, unless something is done. Stalin replied that he is well aware of it, but there is a war on and that the condition of the Polish population is no worse than that of the Soviet people in similar walks of life. I told him that I knew this and fully appreciate the difficulties of the situation, but there are certain special hardships to which the Poles are subject because they are refugees or deportees with no roots among the population. I pointed out further that even if some special privileges should be created for the Poles, this would be in the interest of the Soviet Union. When the refugees and deportees return to Poland, they will tell stories of their treatment in the Soviet Union, and these tales will be a potent factor in shaping Polish public opinion with regard to the Soviets. If these stories will be entirely of deprivations and sufferings, the Polish public will think of the Soviet Union very adversely. Strong measures on behalf of the Polish population taken now will create a much more favorable attitude. Stalin said that this was true, and fortunately now the economic situation in the

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Soviet Union is improving rapidly and special measure may be taken. (The next day Stalin called in Wanda Wasilewska, told her that in view of the improving economic situation, improvement in the situation of the Poles is possible, and that the Union of Polish Patriots should prepare plans for improvement and submit them to the Soviet government.)

We returned to the question of Poland. Stalin said that he wants Poland as an ally, and therefore is interested that Poland be strong both internally and externally. He is ready to help the Poles build an army, and he wants to contribute with arms and equipment for 1,000,000 men. It is by no means the intention of the Soviet government to force Poland into the position of a small and weak buffer state. On the contrary, after the defeat of Germany, Poland will play a leading role in Europe. I asked whether he did not consider that the territorial demand of the Union of Polish Patriots with regard to Germany is exaggerated. I observed that even the demand for East Prussia has considerable opposition in American and British public opinion, but that I think the German nation will swallow the loss of East Prussia and Upper Silesia. The demands of the Union of Polish Patriots, however, go much farther and there might be some reason to fear that if granted, they would hurt German national feeling so deeply as to perpetuate German desires for revenge and make impossible the absorption of Germany into a new European order. Stalin answered that he did not care. There are two possibilities: either the peace will be such that it will create no desire for German revenge, or it will be such as to make German revenge impossible. In the latter case, it is bound to hurt German national feelings. The first course would be too risky to embark upon and almost certainly Germany would start another war of conquest within a generation. Stalin then went on to describe the history of German wars of aggression, and he concluded that Germany must be destroyed once and for all as a political power. At this point he gave an account of the agreement reached at the Teheran Conference. He added that not only Germany has to be destroyed as a political power, but also Japan. He said that the United States should show no mercy to Japan, and destroy once and forever its political and industrial power. Both Germany and Japan, he said, are also an economic menace: Germany by its great efficiency, Japan by its ability to undersell other nations in the world market through exploitation of cheap labor. The American workers, he said, have reached a cultural level at which they cannot work for wages which would enable American industry to compete with Japan. I asked Stalin whether he realized that such a policy with regard to Germany could be carried out under only one condition, namely, that the cooperation between the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union be permanent. Should this cooperation break down and develop into rivalry or conflict, one of the powers will try to play Germany against the others. This would lead to a comeback of Germany, and as the treaty of Versailles was mere child's-play compared to what is being proposed now, German revenge would be terrific. Stalin answered that he is not worried about that, because the cooperation between the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union is not merely a temporary conjuncture, but the result of a fundamental community of historical interests.

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I asked Stalin whether he does not believe in the possibility of a socialist or semi-socialist Germany. After all, I said, German social democracy and the German Communist Party had educated the German working class in a Marxian spirit. Should the result of all this Marxist education be entirely destroyed? Mr. Molotov added at this point that there were more than 5,000,000 anti-Nazi votes in the last free German election. Stalin's reply was that the cadres of the German Labor movement have been entirely destroyed by fascism, and the rank and file has shown no moral resistance. He started describing all the atrocities committed by the German soldiers, the manner in which Nazism has destroyed all humane values and brutalized the soul of the German people. When describing the moral effects of fascism and the German brutalities, Stalin appeared to be deeply affected emotionally. He then related the experiences with German war-prisoners who do not even see the wrong they are doing, and when asked how they can do such non-human acts, answered that they were ordered to do so. He concluded by saying, what can you do with a nation which is ready to commit any atrocity because it is so ordered by the government. The comeback of the German Labor movement, he added, is a matter of one or two generations; in the meantime no chances can be taken with Germany.

The consequence for Poland of the policy chosen at Teheran with regard to Germany is obvious. With the destruction of Germany, Poland will emerge as a major European power. Poland should claim not only East Prussia and Upper Silesia, but all German territories up to the Oder, including Stettin. Stalin said that he is not sure whether the Poles should get Breslau or not. Furthermore, he said that President Roosevelt agreed with his point of view, but Mr. Churchill had some hesitations. Mr. Churchill asked who would guarantee the security of such Polish borders, to which Stalin replied, the armed might of the Soviet Union. Stalin added that this conversation was carried on in the presence of Sir Archibald Kerr. (The next day I asked Sir Archibald about it, and he confirmed in full Stalin's statement.) I asked what should be done with the German population of these territories. The answer was that they should be deported. About 3,000,000 might find room in Siberia, some return to Germany which has suffered a great loss of man-power in the war, and as for the rest, Stalin added, maybe there will be room in South American or somewhere else for them.

Somehow we came to talk about France. Stalin said that the trouble with the French is that they have lost their patriotism and are not willing to make sacrifices for their country. I observed that there seems to be a great moral and patriotic regeneration taking place among the French, particularly among the youth. He answered that he is quite aware of it, but these young people have no experience in governing a country. He quoted Lenin as having said that it takes at least 15 years for a new ruling group to acquire the experience necessary for good governing. In the meantime, he added, while they are learning the country cannot be strong. It will therefore take quite some time until France becomes a strong power again.

We came back to Poland and discussed the question of the

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Polish government. Stalin said that there will be no AMGOT in Poland because military administration of Poland would involve a rule of Russians over Poles, which is quite impossible. The Poles must form their own administration. No Polish government will be formed by the Union of Polish Patriots; the Polish government must emerge out of Poland itself. He believes that such forces do exist among the Polish underground. The Union of Polish Patriots might collaborate, and an understanding with the London government might be desirable. "The door to an understanding with the Polish government in London is never closed," he added, meaning, of course, the Soviet government. He is favorably disposed toward Mikolajczyk. I asked about Mr. Romer, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. Both Stalin and Molotov think that he is all right. Molotov quoted a recent speech of Mikolajczyk in which he maintains that he has the support of 90 per cent of the people of Poland. Stalin laughed and said, "I do not know whether I have the support of 90 per cent of the Soviet people; how can he know in London how much support he has in Poland?" He then explained that representatives of the Polish government underground army got in contact with Soviet military authorities, proposing collaboration. The Red Army accepted the offer, demanding only subjection under Soviet military command, but refraining from making any political conditions. The Polish emissaries went back to consult their superiors, but failed to return. The rank and file, however, became impatient and started to join the Red Army or the Partisans. Stalin thought that Mikolajczyk should be warned against believing in the fairy tales of his own intelligence service.

At this point I asked whether there might be any possible changes in the Curzon line. Stalin's first answer was, "Oh yes, four kilometers to the east or to the west." Then I told him that I did not want to ask embarrassing questions, and did not come to embarrass the Soviet government, but to help create understanding. I therefore do not ask and question and do not expect an answer, but I should like to present certain facts and arguments. I told him how strongly the Polish soldiers feel about Lwow, and observed that Mr. Molotov should have read the passages of the reports of the American correspondants who were with me in the army, which had been censored. Mr. Molotov said that he was acquainted with the censored passages, and also knew about the feelings in the army from other sources. I added that Americans of Polish descent feel very strongly about it, and that all Polish refugees in New York who are most sympathetic with the Union of Polish Patriots asked me to raise this question of Lwow with the Soviet government. Stalin answered, "Yes, but if I concede to the Polish demands, I'll have to make war on the Ukrainians, and there are several million of them in the Red Army." I replied, "Once more I am not asking a question nor do I expect a reply, but I should like to express my own views on the subject." Then I said that somebody must be hurt, either the Poles or the Ukrainians. The problem is to hurt that side which can be hurt with less damage to the future of Polish-Soviet friendship. To the Ukrainians, I said, Lwow means less than to the Poles. The Ukrainians have other important cultural centers, and Lwow was anyway outside the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. Then there are almost twice as many Ukrainians as Poles, and consequently Ukraine can more easily suffer

Conference with Marshal Stalin - 5

a territorial loss. In Poland there were five cultural centers: Warsaw, Cracow, Poznan, Lwow and Wilno. The loss of two of them would be very heavy, and acquisition of German cities without a Polish cultural heritage cannot be considered as compensation for the loss of old historical Polish cultural centers. If Poland must give up Lwow, this will be a constant source of anti-Soviet ill feeling and agitation. This may be most dangerous for the future of Polish-Soviet relations. I concluded by saying that this was a statement and not a question, and I did not expect an answer. Stalin said, "This problem must be studied further."

Stalin said that he understands to a certain degree the position of the Polish government in London. They are asked to make territorial concessions in the East, but they are not sure whether the promised acquisitions in the West will materialize. Therefore, he thinks, the Western frontiers of Poland should be settled first. Once they are settled, the discussion about Eastern frontiers will be much easier.

At the end of the conversation, Stalin asked me whether I found my visit to the Soviet Union interesting. I answered in the affirmative. He told me that he thought a visit to Great Britain to see the members of the Polish government should be equally interesting to me. He added that since I am a private person and an American, I can speak more freely than others who are in official governmental positions. I could tell the members of the Polish government in London, he added, what I saw in the U.S.S.R., including the present conversation. He also continued, if I were you I would not only speak to Mikolajczyk, but I would also visit, in your place, Sosnkowski and find out what that man really wants. I told him that I might enquire from the American authorities whether I would be permitted to take my trip back via London. Stalin replied that I should not do that because it would create the impression that I was carrying definite proposals from the Soviet government. If I want to go to London, I should go from the United States, and not say anything now to the British Ambassador in Moscow. He thought that such a visit might prove to be very beneficial, particularly since the Soviet government had no other possibility of dealing with the Polish government except through the British government, and this makes the machinery very heavy. I answered that if direct contacts are desired, why doesn't the Union of Polish Patriots send a delegate to meet a member of the Polish government, say in Stockholm. Stalin answered that this would mean official negotiations, for which definite proposals are needed, and the breakdown of which might make future contacts more difficult. I, as a private individual who speaks without obligation to anyone, could do much more. I replied that I shall investigate the problem upon my return to the United States, and mentioned that Mr. Stanczyk, Minister of Labor was in America. Stalin said I surely should see him, and I replied that I will make sure he doesn't leave the United States before my return.

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At the very end, Stalin asked me whether I believed in the sincerity of the Soviet government's assurances that they do not want to encroach upon Poland's sovereignty and independence. I replied that I might or might not believe in his statements; that they might be political maneuvers. But the fact that he is arming the Polish army, which intends to win and protect Poland's independence, is the real proof of his intentions. I accept that proof.

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4-44 [Handwritten]

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Washington

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Department of Economics,
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Chicago, Illinois.
TDB:mtl

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[ed. note: letterhead] The University of Chicago
Department of Economics
CHICAGO 37, Illinois

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Stalin said that he understands to a certain degree the position of the Polish government in London. They are asked to make territorial concessions in the East, but they are not sure whether the promised acquisitions in the West will materialize. Therefore, he thinks, the Western frontiers of Poland should be settled first. Once they are settled, the discussion about Eastern frontiers will be much easier.

At the end of the conversation, Stalin asked me whether I found my visit to the Soviet

Union interesting. I answered in the affirmative. He told me that he thought a visit to Great Britain to see the members of the Polish government should be equally interesting to me. He added that since I am a private person and an American, I can speak more freely than others who are in official governmental positions. I could tell the members of the Polish government in London, he added, what I saw in the U.S.S.R., including the present conversation. He also continued, if I were you I would not only speak to Mikolajczyk, but I would also visit, in your place, Soankowski and find out what that man really wants. I told him that I might enquire from the American authorities whether I would be permitted to take my trip back via London. Stalin replied that I should not do that because it would create the impression that I was carrying definite proposals from the Soviet government. If I want to go to London, I should go from the United States, and not say anything now to the British Ambassador in Moscow. He thought that such a visit might prove to be very beneficial, particularly since the Soviet government had no other possibility of dealing with the Polish government except through the British government, and this makes the machinery very heavy. I answered that if direct contacts are desired, why doesn't the Union of Polish Patriots send a delegate to meet a member of the Polish government, say in Stockholm. Stalin answered that this would mean official negotiations, for which definite proposals are needed, and the breakdown of which might make future contacts more difficult. I, as a private individual who speaks without obligation to anyone, could do much more. I replied that I shall investigate the problem upon my return to the United States, and mentioned that Mr. Stanczyk, Minister of Labor was in America. Stalin said I surely should see him, and I replied that I will make sure he doesn't leave the United States before my return.

At the very end, Stalin asked me whether I believed in the sincerity of the Soviet government's assurances that they do not want to encroach upon Poland's sovereignty and independence. I replied that I might or might not believe in his statements; that they might be political maneuvers. But the fact that he is arming the Polish army, which intends to win and protect Poland's independence, is the real proof of his intentions. I accept that proof.