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**Minutes from the Discussion between the
Delegation of the PRL [People's Republic of Poland]
and the Government of the USSR," 25 October - 10
November 1958**

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[Excerpt from session on 10 November 1958.]

Khrushchev: He turns to the German question and quotes the recent statement of [U.S. Secretary of State John Foster] Dulles on the matter of Berlin.¹

If a conflict results, they know full well that we are in a position to raze West Germany to the ground. The first minutes of war will decide. There the losses will naturally be the greatest. After that, the war might drag on for years. Their territory is small-West Germany, England, France-literally several bombs will suffice, they will decide in the first minutes of the war. We recently conducted tests, and we have such [delivery] vehicles that at the same strength they use ten times less fuel, so in the same space we can produce ten times as many bombs.

There were some among us who believed that we would have to withdraw from Berlin. Beria proposed this, and he was supported by "feeble" Malenkov. They believed that we should give up the GDR and Berlin. That was in 1953. What would we have accomplished after that? They did not even recognize the border on the Oder and Neisse, so that would have been complete stupidity. They would not have even recognized the Western border of Poland, but had pretensions to Gdynia and Gdansk. We have to defend the border on the Elbe. Are we supposed to give up a population of 18 million in the GDR for nothing, without a fight? That's stupidity. We should fully support Ulbricht and Grotewohl. The FRG simply offered us gold, dollars, so that we would not support the GDR. They simply asked - how much do you want [?] Of course we rejected this, we do not negotiate on such questions.

You know about our latest suggestions with regard to Berlin.

Gomulka: We know. We understand that they are aimed towards liquidating the western part of Berlin.

Khrushchev: It is not that simple. I am only announcing that matter. That is the beginning of the struggle. Our announcement in our presentations is only the beginning of the action. Undoubtedly it is an exacerbation. The GDR will aggravate the issue of transport, especially military, and they will have to turn to them on matters of transport. Of course an exacerbation will result.

Gomulka: It is understood that in the longer term a situation cannot continue in which in the interior of one state, the GDR, stands another state-West Berlin. It would be different if the unification of Germany were a close prospect-and that was possible at the time of Potsdam, when it was considered a temporary status-until the unification of Germany. But currently the situation is different and such a prospect is lacking. Such a state of things cannot be maintained. There is not even a single state in the West that would support the unification of Germany. Even France and England do not wish that upon themselves.

Khrushchev: And France and England are afraid themselves of whether we might not give in on this issue. In 1956, they were full of happiness, they thought that Poland had perished as a socialist state. They were mistaken, but even if it had come to pass, even if we had had some difficulties in Poland, it would not have saved them. We would have gone through Czechoslovakia, through the Baltic Sea, but we would have never withdrawn from the GDR. We would not allow the GDR to be swallowed up.

Gomulka: Do you intend to address the three states [i.e., Western powers] about liquidating the status of Berlin?

Khrushchev: No. My declaration today should be understood in such a fashion, that we are unilaterally ceasing to observe the agreement on Berlin's status, that we are discontinuing to fulfill the functions deriving from our participation in the Control Commission. Next, we will recall our military commander in West Berlin and our [military] mission. [East German Premier Otto] Grotewohl will ask the English and Americans to leave, along with their missions. Our military, however, will remain in the GDR on the basis of our participation in the Warsaw Treaty. Then the capitalist states will have to turn to the GDR on matters relating to Berlin, transit, and transport. They will have to turn to Grotewohl, and he is firm. And that's when the tension begins. Some form of blockade will result, but we have enough foodstuffs. We will also have to feed West Berlin. We do not want to, but the population will suffer from it.

Ignar:2 That political stance is of course right, as long as you say that it will not cause a war. If not, then it is correct and I, in any case, think so.

Khrushchev: War will not result from it. There will be tensions, of course, there will be a blockade. They might test to see our reaction. In any case we will have to show a great deal of cold blood in this matter.

Gomulka: They might try different forms of blockade. That might play a part in the summit meeting.

Khrushchev: According to the Potsdam agreement, the FRG should not join any alliance against the countries with which Germany fought. But they joined NATO, which is clearly directed against us. That is clearly in conflict with the Potsdam agreement. West Berlin is there to be used as an attack base against us. They are turning to blackmail. Five years ago-that was different. Then, we did not have the hydrogen bomb; now, the balance of forces is different. Then, we could not reach the USA. The USA built its policies upon the bases surrounding us. Today, America has moved closer to us-our missiles can hit them directly.

Gomulka: What about de Gaulle?

Khrushchev: He will not actively support them. De Gaulle fears the Germans. During a meeting in Moscow with the French (Guy Mollet), we said to them: Why would the Germans attack to the east? There they will meet the greatest resistance, there it will be difficult for them. Hence, they will certainly attack to the west. De Gaulle understands that if the Germans start looking for weak spots they will attack France, because if they want to attack the USSR, they will have to go through Poland. De Gaulle is a realist, a military man, he understands completely the danger to France.

On the matters relating to West Berlin, we consulted with the comrades from the GDR. They fully support these steps.

Gomulka: We have our trade agreements with the FRG. We ship goods to West Berlin.

Khrushchev: You can keep those agreements, but you should speak with the GDR about transport. The GDR also trades with them. They supply them with briquettes, and they receive coke, which they give to Poland....

Notes:

1. In a speech in October 1958, Dulles had drawn a parallel between the U.S. commitment to Taiwan during the Taiwan Straits Crisis and its commitment to Berlin. In talks with the Soviet ambassador to the GDR, M. Pervukhin, Ulbricht interpreted

Dulles' statement as a warning that as soon as the crisis in the Far East was resolved, the "imperialists" would turn their attention to Berlin. Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War, 198-99*.

2.Stefan Ignar, Vice Chairman of the Polish Council of Ministers."