

November 14, 1945

Gomulka's Memorandum of a Conversation with Stalin

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Summary:

Stalin and Gomulka discuss Polish political structure, domestic policy, and foreign relations.

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Contents:

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1. The political situation in Poland third quarter of 1945^[i]

On the PPS [Polish Socialist Party]. You are wrong if you think that Morawski^[ii] is just naive. He is clever and follows the orders of others who teach him and give him orders. There are smarter people in the PPS than he. Morawski does not want to oppose them and fulfills their orders. Before he obeyed Bierut, and now he is obeying others. They, that is, the PPS, will leave you anyway.

On the PSL [Polish Peasants' Party]. He [Stalin] is in possession of absolutely sure information that everything that the English ambassador does in Warsaw has been agreed upon with Mikolajczyk. Mikolajczyk is very careful, and although they are in possession of sufficient evidence of what he says to the English ambassador, that evidence is not good enough to compromise him in the eyes of the world. To the suggestion that there are political differences within the PSL, he declared that it is a fact that everybody listens to Mikolajczyk.

On the PPR [Polish Workers' Party]. You keep conducting defensive policy. You behave as if you were sitting in the dock. This is all caused by the fear that the bloc will break apart. Belonging to the bloc does not exclude party agitation. Your agitation is wrong. Your people are not ideologically armed. You need to have a clear program, written in striking terms, so that everybody will know what you want and what you are thinking about your coalition partners. You should clearly state your stance towards other parties. When talking about Mikolajczyk, you should talk about the Warsaw uprising and that his policy is aimed at bringing back the big landowners and foreign capitalists. About the PPS you need to say that it is a party that has certain good points, but you also need to point out their shortcomings. You have to call the antagonistic elements by name. You don't need to worry so much about the bloc disintegrating. If you are strong they are going to come to you. They wanted to isolate the French party the same way and now they cannot not consider them. Thorez^[iii] gave nothing to the nation, and you gave a lot. It is ridiculous that you are afraid of accusations that you are against independence. It is bad that on this issue you moved to defensive positions, that you are trying to explain yourselves. You are the ones who built independence. If there were no PPR, there would be no independence. You created the army, built the state structures, the financial system, the economy, the state. Mikolajczyk was abroad at the time, and Morawski was lagging behind somewhere on your tail. Instead of telling them all that, you are saying only that you support independence. The PPR turned the USSR into an ally of Poland. The arguments are right there at your feet and you don't know how to make use of them. Take the example of a manager of a factory who cried all the time that he couldn't get any materials. And Stalin walked around the factory for two days and found everything that was needed. A membership of 200,000 is a force which can overturn a whole country if it is well organized, well managed and controlled, and if it has instructions as to what to say and how to say it. Do not be so worried about the bloc, leave the inter-party diplomacy to Bierut, and fight for concrete issues: the question of independence, cooperatives, nationalization and state trade.

The issue of the premier. Morawski is not playing a positive role, he is only slowing things down at present. The paralysis of the authorities is a dangerous thing. Lange^[iv] will definitely be better. Morawski is a chicken compared to him. Lange was probably closely connected to U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and belonged to the circle of his trustworthy professor-informants who come to a country and give a good estimate of the situation within a short time. Presently Lange, together with the whole Roosevelt entourage, fell out of grace. This is how the fact that he took Polish citizenship can be explained. Will he, as a socialist, not listen to the PPS? Ask [Wanda] Wasilewska's^[v] opinion. She knows him well and has a good hunch about people. (Don't push Wasilewska away. She may still come back to Poland). He [Stalin] did not exclude the possibility that the PPR might take over the [office of the] premier. If your influence is equal to that of the PPS, why can they have a premier and not you? He agreed, however, that if the PPR were to take the office of the

premier there would be a great outcry about the single-party system and about Sovietization. He took the stance that it was needed and absolutely necessary to change the premier before the election. Morawski could be toppled over the question of cooperatives.

The issue of the election. Why do you think that the election should be postponed as much as possible? It will not be better, but worse. The economic situation will not be better, people will drift back from England, they (the opponents) will organize better and they may even bring you down. Because they know that, the PPS is suggesting that the election be in a year. The election should take place in the spring of 1946. Your Congress should start the election campaign. The fact that the PPS is not responding to your suggestion of creating a bloc should be treated as a refusal. You should address them in writing in an [official] document and say that if you receive no concrete reply you will consider it a refusal. He [Stalin] was not against the [idea of the] bloc but he expressed doubts as to the possibility of forming it and suggested entering the election alone. He said that with good agitation and a proper attitude the party may win a considerable number of votes. You have to stop being diffident.

The issue of the Party Congress. It is necessary to break clearly with the past of the KPP, and state that the PPR is a new party formed in the heat of the battle against the German invaders. The KPP was lead by [Marshall Jozef] Pilsudski's [vii] spies, who forced upon the party an unpopular policy, which isolated the party from the nation. He [Stalin] said he could show documents to prove it. [Those were] the testimony of Sosnowski [viii], a close associate of [Feliks] Dzierzynski [ix] and a testimony of Dabal. [ix] Do not invite any foreign parties to the Congress. If somebody were to come from the CPSM, there would be a completely unnecessary ovation. The congress should be a starting point for an offensive [election] campaign of the party. The knot of the question of independence can be untied beginning with the Congress.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Saxons. Do not believe in divergences between the English and the Americans. They are closely connected to each other. Their intelligence conducts lively operations against us in all countries. In Poland, in the Balkans, and in China, everywhere their agents spread the information that the war with us will break out any day now. I am completely assured that there will be no war, it is rubbish. They are not capable of waging war against us. Their armies have been disarmed by agitation for peace and will not raise their weapons against us. Not atomic bombs, but armies decide about the war. The goals of the intelligence activities are the following. First of all, they are trying to intimidate us and force us to yield in contentious issues concerning Japan, the Balkans, and the reparations. Secondly, [they want] to push us away from our allies -- Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. I asked them directly when they were starting the war against us. And they said "What are you saying? What are you saying?" [Russian: "Shto vy? Shto vy?"]. Whether in thirty years or so they want to have another war is another issue. This would bring them great profit, particularly in the case of America, which is beyond the oceans and couldn't care less about the effects of the war. Their policy of sparing Germany testifies to that. He who spares the aggressor wants another war. To the statement that there are rumors in America that soon there will be an agreement between America and the Soviet Union, he said "It is possible."

Intelligence Service. This part of the conversation took place because I informed him that the English keep alluding to my going to London. He declared: "I assure you that they are not inviting you for a good purpose. Do not refuse directly, but don't go." There is a group of complete rascals and ruthless murderers in the Intelligence Service, who will fulfill any order given to them. They are the ones who killed [General Wladyslaw] Sikorski. [x] He [the one who gave the order for Sikorski's assassination] was Governor of Gibraltar at the time, the former head of the English Military Mission in the USSR, and a ruthless murderer. He prepared the crash of Sikorski's plane. When Stalin asked Churchill what happened to Sikorski, Churchill

answered "I gave them strict orders that nothing like that was to happen again," as if you could kill the same man twice. They killed Sikorski probably because he threatened the English that [Poland would move] to the American side. They tried to kill Tito three times. Once they incited the Germans against him. Tito was with his staff and there were about two hundred English and American officers there who left him one day before the attempted attack. The Germans performed a landing operation on Tito's headquarters. Tito was saved by a Soviet pilot who took him away to an island. Not long ago they organized a train crash, but Tito took the train a day earlier and his car on the train was empty. In 1942 when Molotov was in London, the English invited the people accompanying Molotov for a ride on a four-engine plane. The English officers and Molotov's people all died. When the English really care about [killing] someone, they sacrifice their own people as well. When we go to England, we use our own planes, our own fuel, and have our own guards by the plane to make sure that they don't add anything to the fuel. The Soviet pilots explained Sikorski's crash [by saying] that powder must have been added to the fuel. The English usually invite you to their country to find out what your weak spots are through either drunkenness or women. Whenever they can, they blackmail the chosen victim and try to recruit people. Unszlicht[xi] was also recruited this way by the czarist police.

Loans. If America wants to give, you should take, but without any conditions. You need to reject the open door policy, since they use this policy only towards colonial countries. You can give the Americans most-privileged-nation status. You cannot reject the proposal to permit trade representatives in [the country] because you don't officially have a monopoly on foreign trade, and private capital exists in your country. You can agree to having particular projects built in your country in ports, in Warsaw, or other places, but you cannot agree to concessions. We want to take from them six billion at 2.5% for forty years; the payments would start in nine years. At first they were telling us about the open door policy as well, but they had to back out and suggested that we ask them for loans. We don't want to ask until we are sure that we are going to receive. They are already backing out, because they gave us four hundred million from lend-lease[xii] on our conditions. You will have to establish some customs tariffs. It provides state income and there is no state without tariffs. You also have to guard well the frontiers on the USSR side.

Nationalization. You need to carry it out. It would be good if it were the act of a new premier. The National Council [Polish: Krajowa Rada] should pass it. You should not tie your hands with a clause about damages. You could for example call it a "fair compensation." Check how Mexico did it with their industry so that you will always be able to say that you follow Mexico's, not Russia's, example.

Quotas. It will be difficult for you to keep the quotas for two to three years. The best way is for the state to have reserves and force the farmers to lower their prices by interfering in the market. This is what we did in Latvia and Estonia by throwing one hundred thousand tons of crops [on the market] and lowering the price of bread five times.

Inflation. It is impossible to avoid it. You should not fall into the extreme inflation like after World War I, but you cannot economize on production credits.

Western Territories. He [Stalin] expressed surprise that Zhukov doesn't want to accept the Germans [living in Poland]. You should create such conditions for the Germans that they want to escape themselves. Keep only the ones you need. Wieslaw [Gomulka] should not take the Ministry of Western Territories, he should concentrate on the party and the election campaign. Somebody else needs to be found for that post. He [Gomulka] should not even take formal responsibility for Western Territories. You should learn from our experience and have a few vice-premiers, each watching over several ministries. You should not be afraid . . . [illegible] . . . you have twenty people and keep shuffling them around. It is impossible that during all this time you did not educate many good people. You

should not pump the people out of the party although you were right to have taken the responsibility for the country. If the party gets stronger it will be easier to do the state work as well.

State domains[xiii] in the Western Territories. The idea is correct, but where are you going to get the labor force from? Because of the agricultural reforms, for a few years in Poland there will be no influx of people from the countryside to the cities. We are starting to implement a different policy in soviet communes [Russian: sovchoz]. We give the workers housing and some land, between half a hectare and hectare for an accessory farm. We did the same with railroad workers. We have been attacked "from the left" that we are creating a new petty bourgeoisie. This is incorrect and not Marxist. Great capital creates around it a craftsman- and petty-bourgeois-focused environment as a reserve of labor force. America, the most capitalist of countries, can be taken as an example here. America's crafts and light industry are also the most developed [in the world]. A socialist farm also has to create such an environment as a reserve of labor force. Changes are occurring in the Soviet Union in the laws managing labor. In the past, the rule was that as the most qualified metal industry workers earned the most. We suffer the "misfortune of no unemployment," and therefore people do not want to do hard labor, such as mining, for example. Therefore we pay more to unqualified workers performing hard labor, such as miners, than we pay metal industry workers.

Transportation. The most important issue. First he [Stalin] was against moving Minc into transportation, but later agreed to it, once he found out that we had no people in transportation. He stipulated that Minc should not leave industry. He promised to look into our proposals concerning transportation, particularly the question of moving transit onto the seaside line. He sees no possibilities for us to get locomotives and train cars with their help.

Reparations. He [Stalin] stated that they are beginning to implement a new system of reparations, namely instead of bringing in machines that would not start running until after a year, they are planning to start production in Germany within a few weeks. There are specialists - engineers - there, and a lot can be produced and reparations can be received in the form of ready products. This is even more necessary because for reasons relating to transportation, bringing in machines is very difficult. The Germans are very pleased with that. He was interested in our detailed needs and said that we can obtain a lot if we use that system.

Agricultural reform in Germany. The English and Americans are furious, but we are doing our thing. This way we are destroying the junkers, a class which is economically most combative. Forests, of which there have been too many in Germany, are also getting divided.

About the conversation between Bierut and Molotov. He [Stalin] was notified by Lebedev[xiv] that on the basis of his conversation with Molotov, Bierut drew a conclusion about a shift of the Soviet position towards Poland. He showed particular interest in the course of that conversation and concluded that there is no shift towards Poland whatsoever and that Molotov was probably in a bad mood at the time.

About the navy. Explain to me [Stalin] what happened concerning the navy. How could it have happened that you believed that we wanted to give you ships instead of machines as reparations. I explained to Bierut twice that it wasn't the case, and Bierut kept muttering something about gasoline. I had the impression that you simply did not want any communist bunkers in your country. You are ashamed of it. I scolded Bulganin for [passing on] inaccurate information that you will be getting ships at the cost of reparations. He is a clumsy and not very flexible man. The whole time Stalin thought that we will receive ships as an advance on the 15% of the

one-third of the trophy German navy. [Stalin said] In Potsdam I promised to give [it] to you for free, but the 15% of the navy ships is more than I had promised. It has been taken from the enemy, after all, and Bierut got angry with me that I am not giving things away for free. Such lack of trust spoils relations. In the meantime, Stalin called Wyszyński and Kuznetsov concerning this matter. He came back after the phone conversation and declared that the matter stood worse than he thought, and that the Soviet bureaucrats really wanted to cheat you [Poles] and count twenty-three ships as reparations and you are agreeing to it. It is all coming from Bulganin. If you think there are no stupid generals, you are wrong. Later Stalin declared that they will have to give us those ships for free. In the meantime, another phone call came from Moscow. It became clear that the 15% mentioned in the Polish-Soviet agreement refers to the commercial fleet, not the navy, and that apparently an agreement was reached in Moscow with a Polish delegation that the twenty-three ships are to be counted in exchange for the shipwrecks which the Soviet navy will raise from the bottom of the Polish sea and take. Stalin asked that the copy of the agreement be sent to him. He agreed to it unwillingly, as if it were a fait accompli.

The army. Concerning officers of the Red Army in the Polish Army taking Polish citizenship - many of them do not want to take it because they are afraid that the leadership will change. We don't want to force them. You should Polonize the army all the way through. You can let go of the Red Army generals and officers whenever you want, as soon as possible. If you need a released soldier's help, they should help you, but as an instructor. If it upsets Bulganin, that means he doesn't understand anything. You keep doing your thing and don't pay attention to that. Why did you approach Bulganin and not a military attaché in Poland? When he found out about the issue involving Rear-Admiral Abramov, [xv] he pointed out that we should not put Soviet people in uncomfortable positions, that is, inviting them to certain posts [only to] release them later.

The Red Army in Poland. There are no international circumstances that would require keeping large troops of the Red Army in Poland. Only small troops guarding the transit railroad line could be left. The only question is your domestic situation. The point is that they would not kill you. The situation is similar in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. They don't want us to leave before the election either. The number of Red Army soldiers in Poland is steadily diminishing and will continue to diminish. We will soon pull the last soldier out of Czechoslovakia under the condition that the Americans pull out as well. He [Stalin] generally spoke for localization but make no concrete promises concerning that matter. He stated that after the war plundering instincts were awakened among the Red Army soldiers. In Berlin alone they took two hundred thousand watches. One of the reasons is that the command of the Red Army allowed the released soldiers to take some amount of spoils home. When the demobilization is over marauding will end as well.

Grain for sowing. He was embarrassed when he found out that Molotov refused to lend [Poland] fifty thousand tons of grain for sowing. He was urging us to take thirty thousand although he wasn't sure whether it could still be done. He called Rokossovskii [and told him] to give the thirty thousand tons as a loan. He confirmed that order to Molotov by phone.

Zaolzie. You have coking coal, so economically your problem is solved. Nobody but us would support your claims. We would be risking defeat if we supported your claims. Why should you or we compromise ourselves? You should solve this situation by resettling the population. You need to organize some kind of Polish-Czech conference. We can help you with it if you want us to. It is no good that all the Slavic countries unite, and only two of them are arguing.

Yugoslavia. The picture of the partisan movement in Yugoslavia was not as pretty as it seemed from afar. During the take over of Bialogród [xvi] Tito was in Moscow. The

partisans could not keep up an open battle with the Germans at all. However, Tito was much more ruthless towards the enemy than you. Of thirty-four thousand of Pavelicz's[xvii] captives [POW's -- trans.] he had fourteen thousand shot. The English demanded that we influence Tito in order to postpone the election once Szubaszic [xviii] left the government. We answered that Tito's government is the only legally valid and universally recognized government of Yugoslavia and only that government can decide about the election. The English have already been silent for two weeks concerning this matter. The English were the ones who forced Szubaszic to leave the government.

Revkom.[xix] Stalin was on the front line at the time. Dzierżyński dreamed of a Soviet Poland. Lenin unwillingly agreed to Revkom. We very quickly realized that creating Revkom was a mistake. In a country such as Poland, which for so many years was under foreign rule, choosing Soviet rule was a mistake. Lenin tried to explain it as prodding Poland with a bayonet just to see. But of course that is not a sufficient explanation.

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1. Letter of a Swedish sailor-communist to the Soviet Government concerning anti-Soviet agitation in Gdańsk and Gdynia.
2. The delay in the invitation was caused by the unexpected arrival of Harriman at Sochi.
3. Truman removed Hopkins.
4. Freedom of the press -- Lenin treated like a German spy by the bourgeois press.
5. Associated Press and Timoshenko[xx] - Stalin in Teheran and forcing the correspondent to publish a denial which was dictated to him under threat of expulsion from the Soviet Union.
6. Good-naturedly calling us "tolstoyniks" during dinner.
7. Benefits from power -- Georgian deputy who bought oxen and built two houses.

[i] Words "third quarter of 1945" added in hand on the original.

[ii] Edward Osóbka-Morawski, premier of TRJN (Temporary Government of National Unity).

[iii] Maurice Thorez, General Secretary of the Communist Party of France.

[iv] Oskar Lange, a well-known economist, active in the PPS and PZPR, was a professor at the University of Chicago during the war.

[v] Wanda Wasilewska (1905-1964): socialist and communist politician and writer; leader of the Polish communist emigration in the Soviet Union during World War II—President of the Union of Polish Patriots in the USSR; Stalin's protégée. Did not return to Poland after 1945.

[vi] Marshall Jozef Pilsudski (1867-1935): Polish national leader, architect of Polish independence in 1918, President 1918-1922 and Premier 1926-27, 1930.

[vii] Jan Sosnowski, active in SDKPiL, lived in the USSR after 1917. He died in the purges of 1937-38.

[viii] Feliks Dzierżyński (1877-1926): Polish and Russian communist politician; founder and President of the Cheka, 1917-1926; held various posts in the Soviet Government (Sovnarkom).

[ix] Tomasz Dabal, one of the leaders of the KPP, died in the purges in 1938.

[x] General Władysław Sikorski (1881-1943): eminent Polish military leader and statesman; Prime Minister of the Polish Government in Exile, 1939-1943; died in air crash in Gibraltar.

[xi] Józef Unszlicht, active in SDKPiL, lived in the USSR after 1917, died in purges in 1937-38.

[xii] The Lend-Lease Act of 1941, on the basis of which the USSR received from the

United States equipment and supplies worth 11 billion dollars during the war.

[\[xiii\]](#) State-run farms.

[\[xiv\]](#) Viktor Lebedev, USSR Ambassador in Warsaw, 1945-52.

[\[xv\]](#) Nikolai Abramov, rear-admiral, a Russian officer who for five months (August-December 1945) was Chief of Staff of the Polish navy.

[\[xvi\]](#) Belgrade.

[\[xvii\]](#) Ante Pavelic, a Croatian politician and soldier who collaborated with the Germans during World War II.

[\[xviii\]](#) Ivan Subasic, premier of the Yugoslavian emigration government in London in 1944. In 1945, after an agreement with Josip Broz Tito, he became a Minister Of Internal Affairs in Tito's government. He resigned from that post after several months.

[\[xix\]](#) The Temporary Revolutionary Committee of Poland, which was to become the Polish Soviet Government in case the Red Army won in 1920. It existed for a short period of time in the summer of 1920 on the territory seized by the Red Army. Julian Marchlewski was the Chairman; other members were Feliks Dzierżyński, Feliks Kon, Edward Próchniak and Józef Unszlicht.

[\[xx\]](#) Semyon Timoshenko, a USSR marshal.