

August 3, 1959

Gomulka Complains to Nixon about Radio Free Europe

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Summary:

Polish Communist chief Wladyslaw Gomulka complains to Vice President Nixon that RFE "simply piles abuse on everything and everyone in Poland."

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

Approved by Mr. Kohler
Aug. 31, 1959

M-509 (39)

DATE: August 3, 1959
XR 762.00

SUBJECT: Conversation Between Gomulka and Vice President

PARTICIPANTS: Poland
 W. Gomulka, First Secretary, Polish United Workers' Party
 J. Cyrankiewicz, Prime Minister of Poland
 A. Rapacki, Minister of Foreign Affairs
 J. Winiewicz, Deputy Foreign Minister
 Z. Janczawski, Interpreter, Polish Foreign Office

COPIES TO: United States
 The Vice President
 Dr. Milton Eisenhower
 Jacob D. Beam, American Ambassador
 Foy D. Kohler, Deputy Assistant Secretary
 Edmund Glenn, Interpreter

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Following introductions and greetings, and press photographs, Mr. Gomulka, who presided on the Polish side of the table, welcomed the Vice President to Poland. He said the Polish leaders had been happy in 1957 when they had learned of the Vice President's desire to visit Poland and were glad that the occasion had now arrived for the realization of this event, though only too briefly. He hoped the meeting would give an opportunity for a broad exchange of views on both Polish-American relations and broader international questions.

First, however, Mr. Gomulka felt it necessary to deal with a certain fact which the Poles had found rather strange and rather unpleasant. The Polish leadership had been taken aback by the recent Congressional resolution and by the President's proclamation based thereon establishing the "Week of the Captive Nations." They had been especially astonished that this proclamation was issued on the eve of the Vice President's visit. It was bound to cast a shadow on Polish-American relations which had recently been developing in a satisfactory way.

Mr. Gomulka said he must ask the Vice President how he explained this event. Did the Vice President consider the Polish leaders on the other side of the table as representatives of an enslaved nation or of the Polish people? If the Vice President saw them as captives, or perhaps as those who were kept in the Polish nation in bondage,

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any government had some influence with its own press and could cite many harmful articles. However, he could cite Radio Free Europe which the U.S. Government subsidizes and, therefore, can control. If there was ever a case of indirect aggression, RFE was one and it was high time that its operations be brought to an end. If we are to have the intellectual disarmament of which Dr. Eisenhower spoke, then it was certain time to end such abuses as those emanating from RFE. He accepted discussion as proper and added that there are papers in Poland which defend an ideological or Catholic point of view, but he could not accept wanton libel and gross personal attacks. Mr. Gomulka thought that the distortions Dr. Eisenhower had complained about were those of American reporters. After being set straight by Messrs. Rapacki and Cyrankiewicz, he said that: It might be true that there were abuses in the USSR in this connection. However, the fact is that Poland is attacked 18 hours a day by crude, insulting propaganda emanating from the territory of Western Germany, that is, Adenauer's Germany, which is symptomatic in itself. The time has come to put an end to this. The Poles have refrained from interfering with these broadcasts in recent years because they consider, as the saying has it, that "lies have short legs." He was sure that Ambassador Peam followed the RFE broadcasts, since this must be a part of his duties, and was familiar with their insulting content. He wanted to say that it had never happened in the Polish press that there was a libelous attack on leaders of a foreign government, as was the practice of RFE.

The Vice President: Said he wanted to repeat that the Polish press had been very fine in their treatment of his visit. However, he wanted to say again that this is a two-way street. The Moscow Declaration of 1957 was not exactly designed to make the American people feel happy. Moreover, he could speak with some personal feeling with respect to Soviet broadcasts. When he and his wife visited Venezuela last year they were almost killed by Communist mobs. Radio Moscow, two weeks prior to their visit, had been emitting broadcasts hour after hour, urging violence against the Vice President of the United States. He understood that this was not Poland or Polish action. However, if we were to be reasonable, there could not be complaints about the American free press and forgetfulness about provocation coming from the other side. His own view was that restraint was needed on both sides. Again he wanted to repeat that he was raising no question with respect to the Polish press. He was simply speaking to Dr. Eisenhower's point. He had said the same thing to Mr. Khrushchev.

Mr. Cyrankiewicz: Interjected that there still remains the question of RFE.

The Vice President: Added - "and of the Moscow Declaration and of Communist Party activities throughout the world."

Mr. Gomulka: Said he wanted to be frank as had been agreed these talks should be. Therefore the question of RFE should not

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be broadened, as this amounted to side-stepping the issue. The 12-party Moscow Declaration was a purely ideological document. It was placed in the context of the concept of peaceful coexistence of the two systems. Moreover, it was accompanied by a peace manifesto signed by all the Communist Parties. Polish influence had been brought to bear on the preparation of these documents. However, he wanted to repeat that the Vice President could not broaden the discussion to avoid replying to a concrete question. The Communist Parties in various countries were strictly an internal matter. They develop within the working class quasi-automatically, as soon as historical conditions call for it. The United States as yet had nothing to fear from its Communist Party. Historic conditions were not yet ripe. This was a matter of historical development and no one could change the process. As to the personal attacks on the Vice President, Mr. Gomulka could hardly believe that Radio Moscow preached violence against him. Violence against individuals is contrary to Communist principles. Moreover, he could hardly believe that the attacking crowds were Communists and thought they must have been rather only the people of the country.

The Vice President: Retorted that he had read the transcripts of the broadcasts.

Mr. Rapacki: Interjected that he had certainly never seen such things out of Poland. The Poles are against such practices.

The Vice President: Indicated agreement with Mr. Rapacki. He repeated, however, that we must recognize need for freedom to present ideas on both sides. What had been said on the Polish side seemed to suggest that calling for a change in the capitalistic countries was all right but calling for a change in the Communist countries was wrong.

Mr. Rapacki: Said that advocating ideas was proper, but that personal attacks were inadmissible.

Mr. Gomulka: Charged that RFE is not advocating ideas. It simply piles abuse on everything and everyone in Poland. He was not concerned about its effect in Poland but its broadcasts were certainly bad for the creation of a better climate. Now he wished to proceed to the logical conclusion of the discussion. He was pleased to hear that the Vice President had no reservation or criticism as respects the Polish press. He stated that the Polish Government can and will influence its press. The Poles do not engage in any campaign of hatred. They publish and will publish critical comments but based on facts, reasonable in tone and containing no abuse and no incitement to violence. He believed every government could influence its press, to some extent at least, but would accept the American position on this. However, the concrete problem remained of the U.S. Government-financed RFE pouring out

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hours of abuse daily into Poland. He could not absolve the United States Government from responsibility for RFE.

The Vice President: Responded by asking whether Mr. Gomulka believed that the USSR should cease its interference in internal affairs of other countries through its broadcasts.

Mr. Gomulka: Replied that he is not a spokesman for the USSR.

Mr. Rapacki: Referred to his talk on the subject of RFE in 1957 with Secretary Dulles. He said when he brought the subject up, Mr. Dulles turned to an aide and said: "What? Are they still continuing their broadcasts in Polish?"

The Vice President: Said he wanted to ask on a personal basis for Mr. Gomulka's further comment on the meaning of his earlier statement that the USSR has changed since Stalin. He wanted to make it clear that he was not asking this question in any provocative sense but for information and because his talks in the USSR had been as friendly and frank as those with Mr. Gomulka today.

Mr. Gomulka: Said that he was quite prepared to reply to this question on the basis of his personal experience. He had often been in the USSR during the time of Stalin. Stalin was neurotic, opinionated and ignorant of facts, especially in his later years. He had had many talks with Stalin. Despite this, he did not want to base his comments only on his own subjective opinions. He felt that the facts speak for themselves. In Stalin's time there were many problems between Poland and the USSR which it was impossible to settle as they are now settled. Stalin was always right, had little experience outside the USSR and little understanding. However, Khrushchev was a man with whom one could exchange opinions and even quarrel. It is possible to show him the facts and to convince him of the rightness of one's position. When satisfied that he had been wrong, Khrushchev was prepared to admit this and to yield. A good example was in the economic field. Sixty per cent of Poland's trade is with the other socialist countries, much of it with the USSR, and 40% with the capitalist world. Since Stalin's death, Poland and the USSR have quarreled on the subject but the USSR had taken no punitive steps against Poland. On one occasion, despite the fact that they were then having a disagreement, bad planning had caused Poland to have an urgent need for iron ore; they had asked the USSR for help and got it. As a second example, Poland had had a trade agreement with the USSR, comparable to the Surplus Property Agreement with the United States. The Polish government considered this agreement to be harmful to Polish interests. It had been signed when there was no condition of equality between the two. The Poles presented their case and got the trade agreement changed. If the agreement had been with a capitalist country there would have been no change because

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