

August 19, 1946

**Record of Conversation between I. V. Stalin and the
Leaders of the Polish Socialist Party E.
Osubka-Morawski, St. Shwalbe, and Yu.
Cyrankiewicz**

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Summary:

Stalin and the leaders of the Polish Socialist Party discuss the role of the party in the political development of Poland.

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Record of I. V. Stalin's Conversation with Leaders of the PPS E. Osóbka-Morawski, St. Shwalbe, and Yu. Cyrankiewicz about the Role of the PPS in the Political Development of Poland

Moscow
19 August 1946
SECRET

On August 19. 1946, at 10 p. m. comrade Stalin received leaders of the Polish Socialist party (PPS) Osóbka-Morawski, Shwalbe and Tsarankevich.[1] Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs V. G. Dekanozov was present at the conversation.

After mutual greetings, comrade Stalin proposed to begin the conversation, and asked what questions the Poles had for him.

Osóbka-Moravsky took the floor first.

Osóbka-Morawski stated that the purpose of the visit of Osóbka-Morawski, Shwalbe and Tsarankevich to Moscow is to objectively analyze the political situation in Poland, which developed as a result of the recent referendum. The assessment of the internal political situation of Poland presented by the PPS, says Osóbka-Morawski, is substantially different from the assessment given by the PWP. In this connection, there are contradictions between the two workers' parties in implementation of further policy, in particular - in connection with the forthcoming elections to the Sejm, which, as planned, will be held in November.

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According to Osóbka-Moravsky, the referendum showed that the existing governmental bloc of four parties had a very narrow base among the Polish people. The government bloc can count on only 28 percent of the vote. The rest of the votes would go to the PSL, VIN ("Volnost i nezalezhnost")[2] and the NSZ ("Narodove Sily zbrojne"). The results of the referendum that were published in the press, allegedly represent a crude falsification, which Osóbka-Moravsky sees as impermissible, because everybody knows about it in Poland, and that undermines the already insufficiently solid authority of the government bloc among the population.

Comrade Stalin interrupts Osóbka-Moravsky in order to say that falsification of the results of the voting during the referendum is impermissible, but he found out about it only after it was done.

Comrade Stalin also points out that, in his opinion, it was a mistake to open the first issue, to keep or to abolish the two-chamber parliamentary system, to a general vote. It was confusing for many people, because even some people among the sincere supporters of the existing democratic regime could not understand, what led to such a formulation of the question. Because it is generally known that France, Great Britain, United States and the USSR all have two-chamber systems. Why would the Polish democratic government oppose such a system, and call the population to vote against the senate? When this issue was put for the general vote, it gave weapons to the reactionaries. Many people voted against the removal of the two-chamber system of parliament in Poland, because they did not understand how the two-chamber system, accepted in all other democratic states, could be bad.

Osóbka-Moravsky avoids a direct answer to comrade Stalin's comment. He states that the referendum did not have a decisive influence anyway, and that the elections are more important, because during the elections the reaction will give fight to the young

Polish democracy.

The PPS, --states Osóbka-Morawski, --proposes to expand the bloc of government parties at the forthcoming elections by including in it the "Stronnitstwo Pratsy" (Labor Party) and the PSL.

Osóbka-Morawski tries to prove that it would be very beneficial for the cause of Polish democracy, if the government bloc pulled the best part of the PSL to its side for the upcoming elections, that part, which responded affirmatively to the second question of the referendum, and, therefore, approved the reforms implemented in Poland - the nationalization of industry and the agrarian reform. Osóbka-Morawski presented arguments to support the expediency of such a policy. He said that allegedly, taking the best part of the PSL into the government coalition would not represent any danger for the regime that exists now in Poland. At the same time, it would give them an opportunity to compromise Mikolaichik in the eyes of the most reactionary part of his party, i.e. in the eyes of those people, whose hopes he would be disappointing. The extreme reactionaries from the PSL will accuse Mikolaichik of betrayal and will leave him. Mikolaichik, according to this conception of Osubka-Moravsky, will be dethroned as a person with claims to the role of the national leader, and that eventually he could be removed. Osubka-Moravsky says that they could also move to a bloc with the PSL without Mikolaichik.

Comrade Stalin makes a comment: how can you work toward a block with the PSL, while ignoring Mikolaichik, who is the leader of that party?

Osóbka-Morawski responds that even though Mikolaichik is the leader of that party, he, if necessary, can cease to be leader. Osubka~Moravsky continues to claim that they should count on the better part of the PSL during the forthcoming elections, and that it is the only way to guarantee the majority for the government coalition.

Then Osubka-Moravsky explains why certain groups of the population voted against the second issue of the referendum, i.e. did not approve the reforms implemented in Poland. In his opinion, among those people, who voted against the second question of the referendum, there are not only obvious fascists from the underground, but also many patriots, who are honestly confused and who, because of their political naivete and all kinds of dissatisfactions, caused by some negative, but real, facts, expressed their protest thus [by their vote].

Osubka-Moravsky classifies people who voted against the third question of the referendum (the question about the Western border of Poland), as not only the Germans and German agents, but also as repatriates, who arrived in Poland. The extreme Polish reactionaries were scaring the repatriates, saying that if they approved the addition of the Western territories to Poland, then they would not have an opportunity to return to Vilno and Lvov again.

Then Morawsky turns to the characterization of the Polish bands, of which he names three groups. The first of them is comprised of simply criminal elements, the second -of the reactionary-terrorists, and the third - of just frivolous young people deceived by the reactionary propaganda.

If the government bloc is expanded from four to six parties at the forthcoming elections, then many people--not only all kinds of offended and dissatisfied individuals, but also today's underground including bandmembers--will come to the government's side. In Osubka-Moravsky, opinion, this would guarantee the support of the majority of people for the regime existing now in Poland.

The PWP, says Osubka-Moravsky, underestimates the importance of expanding the

government base at the forthcoming elections. The PWP, allegedly, believes that they should not agree to a bloc with Mikolaichik in any case, and even if the bloc of the four government parties suffers failure at the elections, they could falsify the results of the election.

Osubka-Moravsky explains why during the preparation for the referendum, he said, in his public statements on the issue of borders, that the Eastern border of Poland, which is established now, was created not by the current Polish government, but long before its creation - by the leaders of the three great powers at the conference in the Crimea. In his opinion, such statements made by leaders of his party and in the PPS press on the issue of borders, had a much bigger effect than the official propaganda of the PWP, according to which we should not even remind the Poles about the Eastern borders.

In this connection, comrade Stalin asks Osubka-Moravsky a question whether the PPS and himself personally would defend the current borders of Poland.

Osubka-Moravsky says that he and his party fully approve of the current borders of Poland, and will fight with all they have in order to preserve them.

The current PPS, says Osubka-Moravsky, is a completely new party, which has nothing in common with the old PPS. It is the party of Polish Marxists, the party defending social reforms and, at the same time, enjoying a substantial amount of trust among the Polish people, because for several decades it has had the struggle for Polish independence as its main slogan. The PWP, according to Osubka-Moravsky, has a much smaller influence in the masses and even in the working class. This is because the PWP in Poland is considered the heir of the SDKPiL (Social Democratic Party of Polish and Lithuania) and the CPP (Communist Party of Poland), both of which neglected the struggle for Polish independence.

The PPS made too many concessions to the Polish Workers' Party (PWP), and that was a mistake. The PWP tactics are mistaken, and it does serious damage to the cause of the revival of democratic Poland. The PWP had more than 90 percent of power in its hands until recently. It still has 80 percent for itself and is striving for a practical power monopoly. This does not reflect the PWP's influence in the country, and undermines the respect for the PPS leadership among the part of the workers, who follow the PPS, and also among other strata of the population, who support the Polish Socialists.

The PWP does not trust members of the PPS, does not allow them to occupy positions of authority. Organs of state security are completely in the hands of the PWP. Often, the local branches of those organs contain demoralized and criminal elements, who abuse power and terrorize the population (there were cases where the irresponsible elements from the "bespek" executed innocent people in public, and even burned down entire villages). The PWP puts a preponderance of Jews in the sensitive state positions, including in the organs of state security, which might lead to a significant danger, because anti-Semitism in Poland, as the events in Keltsy have shown, reached levels that Poland had not known, even in the worst years of the sanation regime.

In spite of the fact that the PPS, in Osóbka-Morawski's opinion, has a stronger influence in the masses than the PWP, it does not demand much: the PPS wants to be a fully equal cogoverning party, and not an appendix to the PWP. It does not want to be an institution, which simply stamps the decisions and directives of the PWP.

Osubka-Moravsky spoke sharply against the policy of dispersing entire regional and military district organizations of the PSL.

Summarizing what he has said above, Osubka-Moravsky states that the PPS leadership (which is the Political Commission of the party, namely Osubka-Moravsky, Shvalbe and Tsarankevich) came to Moscow in order to inform comrade Stalin about their point of view on the political developments in Poland.

Osubka-Moravsky asks comrade Stalin to support the PPS point of view and to advise the PWP leadership to choose a different tactical line.

Osubka-Moravsky emphasizes that it is necessary that the Soviet government and comrade Stalin personally trust the PPS to the same degree as they trust the PWP. Only if the PWP agrees with the policy line proposed by the PPS, the course for strengthening Polish-Soviet friendship will fully triumph.

Tsarankevich mainly repeats Osóbka-Morawski's ideas. In his opinion, there are two roads: a bloc of four parties that are currently in the government, i.e. as a matter of fact, as he put it, a dictatorship of the proletariat, or a bloc of six parties, i.e. expanding the base of the government. In Tsarankevich's opinion, the expansion of the government base is absolutely necessary, because the existing situation does not reflect the correlation of class forces in the country. There are three strong parties in Poland: (1) the PWP, (2) the PPS, and (3) the PSL. As far as other parties are concerned, they are not parties, but fictions. Taking this into account, it is impossible to ignore the PSL.

Tsarankevich differs from Osóbka-Morawski in that he thinks that any bloc with Mikolaichik's party is unthinkable without Mikolaichik himself, because Mikolaichik is the leader of the PSL. If we agree to a bloc with the part of the PSL that split from Mikolaichik, or with that part of the party, which will split from it in the future, then that would mean that Mikolaichik not only would not lose, but, to the contrary, would win in such a situation. His authority in the party and among the petty bourgeois strata of the population, in general, is unfortunately, quite strong.

Shvalbe also believes that it would be impossible to hold, as he put it, honest elections, in Poland without the participation of the PSL. Shvalbe allows the possibility that in some districts they would be able to hold the elections without a bloc with Mikolaichik.

Further on, Osubka-Moravsky, Shvalbe and Tsarankevich made separate statements on various subjects. Osubka-Moravsky, in particular, spoke very highly about Shvalbe and Tsarankevich. He said that Shvalbe is the person, whom all Poland knows as a fighter for the united front in pre-September Poland, that he left the PPS before the war, because the leadership of that party then did not agree to create a united front. As far as Tsarankevich is concerned, he, according to Osubka-Moravsky, was in Oswentsim [Auschwitz] and in other German concentration camps. While he was in the concentration camps, Tsarankevich participated in the leadership of the underground committee, which provided materials about the concentration camps for the Allies, for anti-Hitler propaganda.

When the Poles exhausted all their questions, comrade Stalin took the floor.

1. Comrade Stalin states that Osubka-Moravsky and his friends, of course, know better what is happening in Poland, but he, Stalin, has a slightly different opinion in terms of their assessment of the political situation in Poland. Comrade Stalin believes that as a result of the referendum that was held, the positions of the democratic bloc and of the Government of National Unity did not become weaker, but, to the contrary, became stronger. Mikolaichik's position, meanwhile, became substantially weaker. Mikolaichik stated at the press conference for foreign journalists that he would

demand the establishment of Anglo-American control over the elections in Poland. A person, who is appealing for help to foreign powers, trying to find protection for his policy, is not a patriot of his country, and the Polish population will understand it very well--that part of the Poles which up until now followed Mikolaichik.

2. The PPS leaders are wrong when they try to judge the results of the referendum by the percent of those, who voted against the first question of the referendum--whether the new Polish parliament should have one or two chambers. Comrade Stalin emphasizes that as he mentioned before, putting this question for popular referendum was a mistake.

3. Is it expedient to expand the bloc for the forthcoming elections to the parliament? The Poles themselves should seriously think about this question. But to join a bloc with Mikolaichik is probably already impossible (seichas ',pozhalui, uzhe nel 'zia). He takes too much liberty and compromised himself as an enemy of Poland's interests, as an enemy of its independence. Mikolaichik's demand regarding the control of foreign states--in particular of Great Britain and America--over the elections in Poland, could lead to substantial dangers for Poland itself, because in the future it could lead to direct foreign intervention.

4. Should Poland take the road of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat? No, it should not. There is no such necessity. Moreover, it would be harmful. As a result of this war, Poland and other countries of Eastern Europe could choose an easier, less bloody developmental path, that of social and economic reforms. As a result of the war, a new type of democracy has emerged in Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and other countries of Eastern Europe, which is completely different from the democracies, which were established in several other countries before them. For example, if we speak: about British democracy, or even French democracy, where 200 families still decide the country's fate; it is one type of democracy. Comrade Stalin calls this type of democracy a political democracy, which even after this war did not as much as touch the economic basis of the state. As far as the democracy, which has emerged in the countries of Eastern Europe, including Poland, is concerned, it is another, completely different type of democracy. This, -- comrade Stalin says -- is a more comprehensive (kompleksnaia) democracy. It affects not only the political, but also the economic life of the countries. This democracy has carried out transformation of the economy. So, for example, in Poland, the new democratic government implemented the agrarian reform and the nationalization of big industry, and this is quite sufficient as a base for further development in the direction of socialism without a dictatorship of the proletariat. As a result of this war, the character of Communist parties has changed; their programs have changed. The sharp cleavage, which existed before between the Communists and the Socialists, is slowly disappearing now. The proof of that, for example, is the fact that the Communist and the Socialist Democratic parties of Germany became one party. Dictatorship of the proletariat does not figure in the program of the United Party of Germany.

5. However, does it mean that the democratic governments of the countries, which do not have a dictatorship of the proletariat, and who follow the reform road to socialism, should not decisively fight against the reaction, which is attacking them? No, it does not mean that. It is necessary to defend to the end the democratic transformation, the social and economic reforms, implemented in the countries of Eastern Europe, including Poland.

6. Comrade Stalin believes that the question about the "Jewish preponderance (zasilie)" in the state institutions and, in particular, in the organs of the state security, if it is really the case in Poland, should not be ignored. Comrade Stalin cannot imagine that the PWP members are not aware of that.

7. The PPS trust of the PWP and vice versa is absolutely necessary.

To Osóbka-Morawski's comment, whether the Soviet government and personally comrade Stalin trust the PPS, comrade Stalin responds that, of course, they do, and explains that we are speaking about such trust as is possible on the part of a government of one country to the government or government bloc of another country, which enjoys friendly relations with the USSR, and which has an agreement of mutual assistance with the USSR.

Some mistrust toward Russians and vice versa still exists among the Poles, and this is fully understandable. Indeed, in the past the ruling circles of Poland did everything in order to harm Russia as much as possible. The ruling circles of Russia, in their turn, did everything possible in order to weaken Poland. The ruling circles of tsarist Russia are, of course, guiltier than the Polish ruling circles. Not only did they participate in the divisions of Poland, but sometimes they also were the initiators of those divisions. But you have to keep in mind that the progressive democratic revolutionary circles of Russia, beginning from Chernyshevsky, always stood for Polish independence. Chernyshevsky, and later Plekhanov and Lenin believed that the independence of Poland was an inalienable right of the Poles. As far as Lenin and us, his Russian students, are concerned, we always held and will uphold the position of independence of any country, including Poland. Then comrade Stalin says that the Soviet government, as is well-known, received an invitation to take part in the control arrangement over the elections in Greece. Therefore, we had an opportunity to expose the machinations of the Greek monarchists and other reactionary forces in Greece. Nonetheless, we refused to participate in such a control arrangement, since our main principle is not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and it is also dangerous for our country. We, as Bolsheviks, emphasizes comrade Stalin, put the interests of the state above party interests.

8. As far as the request of Osubka-Moravsky and his friends to approve the PPS line and condemn the PWP line, comrade Stalin cannot fulfill this request, because of a very simple reason - that the representatives of the PWP leadership, i.e. the party, which is seen here as a defendant, are absent. Even according to the laws that exist in bourgeois states, notes Stalin in a semi-joking tone, the court would not be able to pass a judgment without listening to the defendant. I can tell you one thing, states comrade Stalin at the end of the conversation--that in my opinion, there should be no monopoly of one party in Poland, -- whether it is the PWP or the PPS. Only a united front of these two parties will guarantee preservation of the democratic gains and independence of Poland.

Comrade Stalin expresses his wish to meet with representatives of the leadership of the PWP and the PPS in the nearest future before the elections.[3]

Osubka-Moravsky, Shvalbe and Tsarankevich express their agreement with comrade Stalin's request with great satisfaction.

As far as the place of the meeting is concerned, comrade Stalin believes that it should not necessarily be Moscow. It would be more expedient to meet somewhere closer to Poland, -- let us say in Kiev, Minsk, or Brest.

The Poles agree that we should talk later about the place of the meeting.

The conversation lasted four hours and ended at 2 a.m., after which comrade Stalin invited Osubka-Moravsky, Shvalbe and Tsarankevich for supper.

After supper, at the Poles' request, they were shown the movie "The Oath" in the Kremlin.

The conversation was recorded by V. Pavlovich.

[1] This conversation resonated in Polish non-Communist political circles. On 29 August 1946 one of leaders of the opposition party PSL V. Kernik addressed Soviet Ambassador in Warsaw V. Z. Lebedev with a request to provide assistance in organization of a trip to Moscow for him and head of the party S. Mikolaichik in order to meet with I.V. Stalin. The purpose of the trip, as Lebedev reported to Moscow, was "to present their views on the Polish issues to Generalissimus Stalin in personal conversations in full hope that Stalin would share the good intentions, which guide the leadership of the PSL." On August 28, Professor S. Grabsky addressed the Ambassador with a similar request. On September 2, a negative response was sent from Stalin. (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 06, Finding Aid 8.11.42, File 698, pp. 70-71,73-74,77-78).

[2] VIN (correct abbreviation ViN) was a military-political underground organization established in the fall of 1945 on the basis of the members of the Armiya Kraiova for propaganda, anti-government, and anti-Soviet work. The command of the YiN was changed three times as a result of arrests. The organization existed until 1952. On liquidation of the YiN structures by the organs of the Polish security services and the NKVD, see NKVD I pol'skoe podpol'e, 1944 1945), Moscow, 1994 (Based on I.V. Stalin's "Special Folders").

[3] See Communiqué 4 for Document 179.