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Conversation Between Mikolajczyk and Stalin

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Summary:

Stalin and Mikolajczyk discuss aid to Polish fighters in Warsaw and Post War Poland and Germany

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CONVERSATION BETWEEN PREMIER MIKOLAJCZYK AND MARSHAL STALIN
in Moscow at the Kremlin on August 9, 1944, from 21:30 to 22:30 p.m.

Participating from the Polish side were also Minister of Foreign Affairs Romer, Chairman Grabski and Mr. Mniszek, interpreter; from the Soviet side, People's Commissar Molotov and interpreter Pavlov. Premier Mikolajczyk spoke in Polish, and Mr. Mniszek translated into Russian; Mr. Pavlov translated the Marshal's responses from Russian into English.

Mikolajczyk: I am very thankful that, despite your many obligations, you were able to receive me today, Mr. Marshal. Yesterday evening, Mr. Commissar Molotov listened to our update on the issue of our discussions with the Committee for National Liberation [trans. note: actually the Polish Committee for National Liberation-Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (PKWN)]. As I left London, I did not yet know about the Soviet Government's official recognition of the function of the Committee in our Country, and so the proxy that I carry turns out to be insufficient for us to reach a conclusive understanding. Hence, I would like to go to London as soon as possible to discuss those issues with the Polish Government in full. I am certain that in the end we will reach an agreement because there is good will toward one, and, with the exception of representatives of the most radical political tendencies, all other Polish circles aim to unite their efforts at this decisive moment.

Stalin: This would be very good.

Mikolajczyk: If I understand you, Mr. Marshal, correctly, you wish that all the active political forces in Poland will gather under a joint leadership.

Stalin: Unconditionally.

Mikolajczyk: You are not thinking that the communists alone should take the helm of the government, but for all tendencies to unite in this direction.

Stalin: This is just what I am thinking.

Mikolajczyk: My task is difficult because it requires a discussion of issues of a fundamental nature, for instance, implementing changes in the Constitution. Here the Premier presents in greater detail our position on the 1935 Constitution, pointing out fundamental changes that have been made beginning in 1939 without violating its essence so as to make it truly democratic.

Stalin: But can something be thrown out of the Constitution?

Mikolajczyk: My mission is difficult because it is precisely on the formal basis of this Constitution that we have signed a whole range of international agreements, the Polish-Soviet one of 1941 among them. I am searching for a way to make it possible to resolve this issue both internally and externally. I am by no means attempting to support the 1935 Constitution. Were I currently in a position that would legally allow guaranteeing Poland a Head of State based on the 1921 Constitution, I would without hesitation choose to return to that Constitution. But the absence of a President of the Republic in case of this solution presents a difficulty.

The chairman of the State National Council^[1], Mr. Bierut, says that it can be recognized temporarily as a sovereign body because it represents the majority of the society. I do not agree with this, and this is the core of the disagreement between us.

My concept is that the State National Council is merely one segment of Polish opinion, whose main expression are the political parties. Only unifying all these segments can express the true relationship of forces in Poland.

Stalin: But can one not find a solution by burdening the chairman of the temporary parliamentary body with these functions of sovereignty? After all, the Provisional Government can even exist without a President. A new president may be elected after a general election.

Mikolajczyk: I hope that a solution to this problem will be found after I return to London.

Stalin: That would be very good.

Mikolajczyk: I now have the following request for you, Mr. Marshal. I would like the Soviet Government to give immediate assistance to Warsaw, where everyone has joined forces in the struggle against the Germans, i.e., both groups tied to the Home Army and the People's Army, simply the whole population.

Stalin: What assistance do you mean?

Mikolajczyk: Warsaw needs weapons. The Germans are no longer strong enough to remove Poles from the sections of the capital they have taken over. But they are trying at any cost to maintain the two great communications arteries which lead through the city across bridges over the Vistula. It is over this that a murderous struggle is on now, in which the Polish forces face the enemy's huge technical might.

Stalin: All these undertakings in Warsaw appear unrealistic to me. It would be different if our armies were approaching Warsaw, but unfortunately it is not so. I had counted on marching into Warsaw already on August 6, but this did not succeed. On the 4th of August, the Germans pulled four tank divisions up to the Praga area, together with the Herman [sic] Goering division brought in from Italy. Because of this, Praga could not be taken, so we launched a circular maneuver after we crossed the Vistula near Pilica. At first, this maneuver was successful on a 25 km wide stretch, 30 km deep. Yesterday the Germans began powerful counterattacks in this area using infantry and two tank divisions. And so, the German side opposed our offensive calculated to take Warsaw with five new tank divisions, of which three presently remain in the Praga region. I have no doubt that we will also overcome this difficulty, but in order to do this we must regroup our forces and bring up the artillery. This requires time. I feel sorry for your people, who rose up to fight for Warsaw prematurely and who with guns in their hands are facing German tanks, artillery and planes. I have been to Warsaw several times, I know the narrow streets of the Old Town, and I realize from this that to control it has no great significance in strategic terms. What can airdrops achieve? With them we can deliver a certain number of rifles and machine guns. But we will not drop artillery. Finally, will the arms that are dropped definitely get into the hands of the Poles. If it were a question of drops in areas lying farther away near Radom or Kielce, it would be easy. But in the city, with the thick concentration of German forces, this is an incredibly difficult mission. It may succeed. One must try. How much help do you need and where should it be dropped?

Mikolajczyk: I can completely understand your doubts, Mr. Marshal. But it is too late to hesitate because the battle is underway in Warsaw, and nothing will stop it. On our side, a whole range of new places have been taken. /Here the Premier quotes several telegrams he has brought along./ Red Army Capt. Kalugin is in the general staff of the Warsaw insurrectionary forces, and he would like to make direct contact with the Soviet command, and in a telegram sent through us he presents the current

state of affairs in Warsaw to you, Mr. Marshal. It closely confirms our own information. The squares indicated as place for drops are secured with barricades, so there is no fear that the arms that are dropped will get into enemy hands.

Stalin: Is this information reliable?

Mikolajczyk: Absolutely. Since direct communications will be established between the Polish forces in Warsaw and the Red Army, it will be possible to signal a drop appropriately. It is a question, above all, of hand grenades and small arms and ammunition. The Germans are also fighting from airplanes, and so if it were possible to use Soviet fighters to protect Warsaw from German raids, this would support the uprising excellently not only militarily but also psychologically.

Stalin: Would our planes be able to land?

Mikolajczyk: No, here we are talking only about airdrops.

Stalin: It's an easy thing to do.

Mikolajczyk: I am asking you therefore, Mr. Marshal, to give instructions to Marshal Rokossovsky.

Stalin: But what is the state of communications? Codes are indispensable for this purpose, since the air is full of various signals. I can assure you, Sir, that we will try on our side to do everything we can to help Warsaw. Who should we be talking to there?

Mikolajczyk: I will ask Warsaw for them immediately, and instruct them to answer directly to you, Mr. Marshal.

Stalin asks more questions about the details of the fighting in Warsaw, about the positions of Polish forces and the effectiveness of resistance.

Mikolajczyk explains on the basis of telegrams from Warsaw sent to London, and at the end once again passionately cites Stalin's promise that the Soviet side will do everything to help Warsaw as quickly as possible.

Stalin confirms this.

Mikolajczyk: As I say goodbye to you, Mr. Marshal, I believe deeply that the relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union will develop auspiciously in the future, not only in our but in the general interest, if it can be based on mutual trust. For my part, regardless of what may still happen in my life, I will adhere to the same political line, which is based on friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Stalin: Friendship, alliance between us is the goal of our policies.

Mikolajczyk: Perhaps, as a farewell, Mr. Marshal would like to say something to hearten our Polish hearts at this difficult moment.

Stalin: Are you not attaching too much importance to words? It is possible to distrust words. Actions are more important than words.

Mikolajczyk: I believe in statements that are accompanied by wisdom and strength.

Stalin: I would like all Poles to understand well that today's Russian leaders are different from the leaders of Tsarist Russia. They wanted to destroy Poland. The same has often and mistakenly been attributed to the current leaders of the Soviet Union. We are not carrying out the old policies of the conquest and destruction of the Slavic nations. This is why we condemn pan-Slavism in its old definition. We recognize the equal rights of all the Slavic countries, especially those who fell victim to World War II. If the current leading Polish politicians can believe that we fundamentally care about Polish-Soviet friendship and that we honestly want to change the whole course of the history of Polish-Soviet relations, it will be possible to make these plans of ours a reality. But the Poles do not believe it. /Premier Mikolajczyk refutes this./ There are among them those who are saying publicly that the former German persecutors are leaving Poland, but new ones are coming in their place, the Soviet ones. When this nonsense talk stops, friendship between the two nations will come.

Mikolajczyk: As I have already said, you, Mr. Marshal, have a chance at this historical moment not only to quiet the doubters but also to win over the hearts of the whole Polish Nation. To reach this goal, you, Sir, need to take our Polish interests into account.

Stalin: In my opinion, the Polish Nation should not follow the Soviet Union, but walk hand in hand with it. The Polish Nation has its own paths. But they can run parallel to the roads of the Soviet Union, in fact to lie in the common struggle against the Germans, common defense, and in helping each other also economically on the basis of full equality. It is not the duty of the Soviet Union to lead the Polish Nation, nor Poland's to lead Russia. If the two countries make an alliance, this will be enough to remove all dangers threatening them. This is our point of view.

Mikolajczyk: Thank you very much for this statement, Sir. I am certain that the Polish Nation will never attempt to impose its own plans or views on anyone.

Stalin: Of course. A friend never tries to impose anything on his friend.

Mikolajczyk: I agree with what you have said, and I agree that Poland and the Soviet Union should walk hand in hand in their own, as well as the general, interest.

Stalin: Poland should also take care to maintain its alliances with England and France and friendship with the United States, so that Polish policies can be anchored not only in the east but also in the west.

Mikolajczyk: Even after beating the Germans, we will need to be vigilant that Germany not regain its economic supremacy in Central and Eastern Europe.

Stalin: The Germans will [trans. note: illegible word]. They are a strong nation. After Bismarck's triumph in 1871, it took 40 years before they launched another attack. And after its failure, they needed 20 or 22 years to regenerate before repeating it once again in quite an effective way. And now, who knows, if in some 20, 25 years they will not be ready to fight again. Yes, indeed. The Germans are a strong nation. Even though Hitler is weakening it. But the German military and economic cadres will outlast Hitler. In our opinion, the German threat may rise again. Hence it is a burning question, the discussion taking place in Washington now about the conditions of collective security.

Mikolajczyk: I have spent my whole life fighting the Germans, and I know them well.

There is a way to prevent the rebirth of Germany. The bombings right now are effective, they must be beaten at home and they must understand. After the war ends, the roads of Germany's economic expansion it built up in its neighboring countries during the war, will need to be interrupted. A long occupation of Germany until it is fully neutralized will also be needed.

Stalin: May God grant that. For my part, I favor all possible and impossible repressions on Germany. But despite all that they may rise again. They are a strong nation. That's why one must have a sword with which to fight them. Our alliance and the forces made available for world security will be this sword.

Mikolajczyk: When I was leaving England last Sunday, I read the interesting statements of three captured German officers. The first one said that the English are fools because they are helping the Russians to defeat the nation from which issued Schiller and Goethe. /Stalin interrupts with belated rebukes./ The second officer claimed that the Nazi party is responsible for Germany's failures because after Dunkirk it got in the way of the march on England. The third officer, a military doctor from Vienna, recommended as the only way out for Germany to make them realize [trans. note: unclear; perhaps it should be "confront the fact"] that they are able to use their technology to conquer the world even with this regime.

Stalin: Communism would sit as well on the Germans as a saddle on a cow. It pleases me that you are so anti-German, Mr. Premier.

Mikolajczyk: Because I know the Germans well. The only solution is to kill off the current German generation one by one because they are an incorrigible people.

Mikolajczyk thanks Stalin once again for his hospitality and friendliness. As they say good-bye, he again draws the Marshal's attention to the question of helping fighting Warsaw. The farewell, which stretches out for a while, is very cordial, almost warm. Romer, saying good bye to Molotov on the side, assures him of our unified and earnest endeavor to reach an understanding with Russia and asks for help in sending telegrams that the Government of Poland may want to send to the Soviet Government via Ambassador Lebedev in London. Molotov gives his permission and assures Romer that the appropriate orders will be issued.

They part.

[\[1\]](#) KRN - Krajowa Rada Narodowa