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# October 8, 1963
## Letter from Gomulka to Khrushchev, Marked 'Final Version'

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## Summary:

Letter from Gomulka to Khrushchev discussing Polish opposition to Soviet proposal for a Non-Proliferation Treaty. Gomulka suggests that the treaty will further split the communist camp. While discussing the state of Sino-Soviet relations, the Polish leader suggests that the Soviet Union and the PRC adopt a common position in matters of foreign policy in order to strengthen the power of the Socialist camp.

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## Original Language:

Polish

## Contents:

Translation - English

Dear Comrade Khrushchev!

This letter is closely related to the phone conversation we had on 2 October. At that time, I expressed a desire to meet with you personally to discuss directly the matters that were the theme of our phone conversation. In the conversation, I also asked you to consider the usefulness of convening a conference of the First Secretaries of the Central Committees of the [East European] Parties, with the possible participation of representatives of the governments of the Warsaw Pact states, in order to jointly discuss and fix the conditions under which the socialist countries might conclude a treaty with the countries of the capitalist world on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. You promised to give me an answer to my proposals in several days, after your return to Moscow.

Regardless of whether the conference proposed by the leadership of our party will be convened or not, I believe that I should meet with you at a time and place that is most convenient for you. I want to discuss with you the matters that I am raising in this letter. I am raising them in this manner, before meeting with you, so that you might consider them in advance.

In the first part of the letter, I present you with the motives and reasons why the leadership of our party does not consider it possible to express our agreement with the proposal presented to us by the Soviet government regarding the conclusion of a treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. In the second part of the letter, I will share with you my own, deeply troubling thoughts about the conflict that has flared up with the People's Republic of China.

The memorandum explaining the Soviet government's views on the conditions under which the Soviet Union would be prepared to conclude a treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons was handed to me on the second of this month by Com[rade Averkii] Aristov.[75] After I acquainted myself with its contents, I explained to Com. Aristov that I disagreed with the proposals contained in it and that I was immediately convening a session of the Politburo of the CC of our party. The session took place the same day, and the Politburo reached the unanimous conclusion that Poland could not support the Soviet government's proposals regarding the conclusion of a treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons for the following reasons:

1) The proposal to not mention in the treaty a prohibition against the creation of joint nuclear forces by the NATO states would mean in effect that the socialist states signing the agreement were expressing their silent consent to the granting of access to nuclear weapons to the Federal Republic of Germany and the other NATO states that do not yet have such weapons.

The creation of a unified, nuclear missile force by the NATO state even under the condition that only the United States, based on its veto power, could decide upon [their] use ... would [still] mean in effect the proliferation of nuclear weapons to states that do not yet possess them. This would be the first step for these states towards obtaining nuclear weapons under their national control. Regardless of whether the USA has ... a veto, multilateral nuclear forces under the NATO states would significantly increase the danger of war.

2) The creation of multilateral nuclear forces would greatly increase the role of the FRG in NATO, enable it to apply more forceful pressure ... upon the policy of the USA and the entire NATO bloc towards the adoption of uncompromising and more aggressive positions with regard to the socialist states. The Federal Republic of Germany has declared its readiness to bear an enormous part of the costs associated with the creation of multilateral atomic forces (according to the bourgeois press, 40% C FRG; 40% C USA; and 20% C the other participants). In this way, the FRG seeks to

assure itself the maximum possible influence upon the policy and stance of the USA, also with regard to a veto over the use of these forces.

One of the main goals that the FRG seeks to achieve with the help of the multilateral nuclear forces and its assumption of second place after the United States in these forces is to demonstrate to the German people that Bonn's policy on the German question has, at the very least, not bankrupted itself, and still has the support of the NATO allies most importantly, the United States. There can be no doubt that the creation of multilateral nuclear forces would strengthen Bonn's pressure against the German Democratic Republic and its population, along with its atomic blackmail against the Warsaw Pact states.

3) The creation of multilateral nuclear forces or any other form of proliferation of nuclear weapons to states that do not yet have them would contradict the spirit of the Moscow Treaty [i.e., the 1963 limited test ban treaty]... The treaty, signed by the leaders of over one hundred states, proclaims as its main goal the quickest possible achievement of an understanding on universal and complete disarmament. In our addresses and publications we have been presenting the treaty as a first step in this direction. In contrast, multilateral nuclear forces mean an increase and proliferation of weapons among the NATO states. Their signature has not yet dried on the Moscow Agreement,[76] and already they are violating the spirit of the treaty. We cannot agree with this, let alone make it easier for them.

4) Omitting the question of NATO multilateral nuclear forces in the proposed [nonproliferation] treaty ... would be a unilateral concession on the part of the Soviet Union and the entire socialist camp to the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the other imperialist countries a fundamental concession that would inevitably bring serious harm to the entire socialist camp.

For a number of years we have struggled against the FRG's gaining access to nuclear weapons in any form. This issue continues to be a fundamental link in our general political line towards the imperialist states. For a number of years the Bonn government has persistently strived for and publicly demanded that the Bundeswehr be armed with nuclear weapons. Given the situation, what would it say to the peoples of the socialist states if their governments were to sign a [nonproliferation] treaty ... that did not forbid the creation of multilateral nuclear forces in NATO, along with other forms of proliferation ...? How could we explain our signatures upon such a treaty in a situation in which the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the other NATO states are making a concrete decision on how to organize multilateral nuclear forces? How can we fight against [such forces] if we voice our silent consent to their establishment in the treaty? It is not difficult to foresee what harm such a treaty would cause for our countries and our parties, especially in the case of Poland, and to an even greater degree for the German Democratic Republic.

The idea of renouncing the treaty in the event that NATO should create multilateral nuclear forces is the worst possible way out. A treaty should not be concluded if one can see in advance that it might be quickly renounced.

Also unacceptable is the proposal of the United States known to me from previous information that both the NATO and the Warsaw Pact states have the right to organize multilateral nuclear forces. We cannot conclude a treaty that would stimulate and legalize the arms race; moreover, in contrast to the NATO states, multilateral nuclear forces would not bring any advantages to the Warsaw Pact countries.

5) Only the USA and the FRG are interested in [the creation of] multilateral nuclear forces in NATO. The USA sees in them a method to stave off the ... decay and collapse of NATO and to maintain and preserve its hegemony in Western Europe. The FRG, for

its part, sees in multilateral nuclear forces an important instrument serving the goals of its revanchist policy first of all, liquidation of the GDR.

Bonn understands that the unification of Germany lies in the interest of neither France nor Great Britain, and thus it cannot count on their real support in its efforts to liquidate the GDR. It can receive such support only from the USA, because the unification of Germany does not directly threaten the interests of the USA and is even in keeping with its anti-communist line.

NATO's multilateral nuclear forces are, in effect, a military-political transaction between the USA and the FRG based on the FRG's committing itself to the maintenance of US hegemony in Western Europe in return for the USA's committing itself to supporting the FRG's efforts to annex the GDR. The maintenance of cohesion in the NATO bloc is in keeping with the realization of the goals of both partners. It is thus necessary to include other states especially Great Britain and Italy in the multilateral nuclear forces. That's where the pressure from the USA and FRG on Great Britain to join the [nuclear] forces comes from.

Multilateral nuclear forces do not reflect the interests of either France or Great Britain. Regardless of its negative stance with regard to the unification of Germany, France is firmly opposed to U.S. hegemony in Europe because it has pretensions to that role itself... Great Britain opposes multilateral nuclear forces in NATO because their creation would undermine its special position with regard to the USA [“special relationship”]; would strengthen the FRG's position in NATO, without bringing [Great Britain] any advantages as a power that already possesses nuclear weapons; [and] would burden it with needless expenditures... [Great Britain also] seriously believes that their creation could increase international tensions, including the Soviet Union's granting the People's Republic of China access to nuclear weapons. We should not dismiss the possibility, though, that Great Britain, under pressure from the USA, and also as a price for certain commitments by the FRG with regard to its entry into the Common Market, will participate in the joint nuclear forces.

The Bonn government and its Chancellor [Konrad] Adenauer have deftly used the contradictions between the USA and France their struggle for hegemony in Western Europe for its policy and its drive to attain nuclear weapons. It concluded an alliance with France to show the United States that the FRG could find an alternative for its policy in case the USA did not want or hesitated to give [Bonn] its support. Life has shown that the alliance between Bonn and Paris has born fruit for the West German militarists. The USA, struggling with France to maintain and ensure its hegemony in Europe, decided to bind itself strongly and permanently with the multilateral nuclear forces. France, seeking to counter this, proposed the idea of creating European nuclear forces based on its nuclear potential and is offering the FRG its own nuclear umbrella. The FRG cannot break away from its main ally, the USA, today, but at the same time it does not want to quarrel with France. While [the FRG is] pressing for the creation of a multilateral nuclear force in NATO, it has also expressed through Adenauer's mouth that it is ready to participate in a European nuclear force as well, whose creation was announced by General de Gaulle's France.

We probably will not be able to prevent the USA and the FRG from creating a multilateral nuclear force in NATO. We should nevertheless direct our policy and diplomacy towards deepening the contradictions and inflaming the struggle between the USA and France. Everything that contributes to the weakening and decay of NATO is in the interest of the socialist states. Our main enemy is and will remain ... American imperialism, not French imperialism. West German imperialism, allied with U.S. imperialism, represents a greater threat for peace in Europe than the alliance between Bonn and Paris. Unfortunately, one cannot say that the policy of the socialist states is sufficiently directed towards playing upon the contradictions within the NATO bloc, especially not the contradictions between France and the USA.

All the factors touched upon above made the leadership of our party decide to

respond negatively to the proposal to conclude a [nonproliferation] treaty ... under the conditions discussed in the Soviet government's memorandum.

The Politburo of the CC [Central Committee] of our party believes that if the NATO countries establish a multilateral nuclear force, the creation of a Sino-Soviet nuclear force should be considered.

In the next part of the letter I would like to share with you, dear Comrade Khrushchev, my own thoughts, which I did not present at the session of the Politburo of the CC of our party, prompted by the desire to coordinate my views with your position.

In my opinion, we should not conclude a treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons even if the USA and other states in the NATO bloc renounce the construction of multilateral nuclear forces in the text of the treaty.

As we know, three imperialist states have nuclear weapons at their dispense today: the United States, Great Britain, and France. In the socialist camp, only the Soviet Union possesses nuclear weapons. For understandable reasons, every imperialist state that possesses nuclear weapons does not want to permit other states in the capitalist world from also becoming an owner of these weapons. This would lead to a further growth in contradictions in the capitalist world and weaken the leading role of the imperialist Great Powers, especially the USA, which is striving to dominate the entire capitalist world. For these reasons, the imperialist “nuclear” powers are interested in the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. Such a treaty, even if it provided for a ban on NATO's multilateral nuclear forces, would still be in keeping with the interests of the imperialist “nuclear” powers. After all, there are three of them, and in the socialist camp, there is only one the Soviet Union. It is highly unlikely that the United States will resign in the near future from the concept of creating a NATO multilateral nuclear force. Still, we cannot exclude the possibility. It could turn out, however, given the stance ... of the People's Republic of China, that it would pay them to resign from NATO multilateral nuclear forces and conclude a [nonproliferation] treaty with the Soviet Union as the price for further inflaming Sino-Soviet relations to the point of their rupture, for ... dividing the socialist camp and the international communist movement. That would of course bring great advantages for imperialism and great losses for socialism.

I am of the opinion that neither a nonproliferation treaty nor any other understandings of serious international importance can be concluded without consulting the Communist Party of China or in spite of the People's Republic of China. If we continue further down such a path, it will inevitably lead to the division of the socialist camp and to fierce factional struggles within the international communist movement and within the communist and workers' parties in individual countries.

We already see today what great damage arose in this regard from the fact that the Moscow Treaty ... was concluded without consulting the Communist Party of China. Undoubtedly, such a consultation would not have led the People's Republic of China to alter its stance on achieving the production of its own atomic bomb. However, it might have been that as a result of such a consultation, the Moscow Treaty would have applied only to the states participating in the negotiations. Because the treaty was concluded for all states, this led to an angry reaction on the part of the Communist Party of China, which interpreted the treaty as an effort to isolate the People's Republic of China both among the socialist states and in the international arena.

In the running debate with the Communist Party of China, we should not permit the debate to lead to a split of the socialist camp into two factions. There cannot be two socialist camps. It must remain one despite all the internal differences. A split of the

socialist camp would alter in a fundamental way the world balance of forces between socialism and imperialism to the benefit of the latter. Despite its smaller productive potential, the socialist camp has predominated and may still have the advantage over imperialism thanks only to its unity. All the basic principles of our policy, our tactics and strategy in the struggle with imperialism over peace and peaceful coexistence of states, for disarmament, for the victory of socialism on a world scale, rest upon the unity of the socialist camp. We must be fully aware of this fact. We must be aware of the consequences that would arise from a split in the socialist camp.

It does not change anything, nor does it excuse us that is, the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], the PZPR [Polish United Workers' Party] and other parties when we say that the Communist Party of China is splitting the unity of the socialist camp. In the name of maintaining the unity of the socialist camp, we must reach an understanding with the Communist Party of China. The socialist camp numbers over one billion people. Let's not forget that for even a moment, and let's appreciate the importance of the fact that the Chinese are almost two-thirds of this population. Without the People's Republic of China, nothing can be achieved in terms of the socialist camp's international policy. We should seek a compromise and move towards the conclusion of a compromise in the debate with the Communist Party of China and the People's Republic of China.

At the root of the divisions with the Communist Party of China lies in my opinion the fact that the People's Republic of China was denied the possibility of participating in the making of decisions with regard to important international matters. It will never consent to this. It is too great of a state, with great future possibilities, to permit itself to be cut off from the settlement of various world problems. The United States, seeking to isolate it from international life and in keeping with its goals of struggle with the entire socialist camp, has cut it off from this up to now; it has not established diplomatic relations with it; it has closed off its entry to the United Nations Organization, has established Taiwan as its own Chinese “state,” etc.

In this situation, the People's Republic of China can insure its influence over decision making with regard to various international questions only through the socialist camp, or speaking more precisely, through the Soviet Union, from whom it demands that it consult with [China] on its political initiatives in the international arena and in its relations with the imperialist states. When it turned out that the Soviet Union did not always consider it proper to take into account the reservations of the People's Republic of China in its policy, there began to grow in the Communist Party of China a rebellion against the CPSU, which after the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty ... spilled out in the forms known to us now. Yes, as I see the matter, the Communist Party of China has already decided upon even a split in the socialist camp and the international communist movement, unless the Soviet Union agrees to coordinate its policy in the international arena with the People's Republic of China.

Our citing the conformity of the Soviet Union's policy with the Declaration from 1957 and the Declaration from 1960 of the communist and workers' parties won't do any good. Those documents only sketch a general line of how to proceed. The CCP [Chinese Communist Party], interpreting them in its own fashion, has not renounced these documents either. It seems to me that we can maintain and apply our interpretation of the general line in practice without raising opposition from the Chinese Communist Party if the Soviet Union will consult and approve its concrete international steps and political initiatives with the People's Republic of China. The CCP has placed particular emphasis on this without stating this demand by name at the conference in 1960, and this also found expression in the conference's “Declaration.”

We cannot strive towards a relaxation of the international situation at the cost of our weakness, at the cost of dividing the socialist camp, and a split in the international worker's movement. Such a relaxation would be illusory, in reality it would quickly

evolve into an even greater tension, because imperialism, seeing our weakness resulting from the division, would not hesitate to turn its aggressive teeth against the socialist states. Without the unity of the socialist camp, there is not and cannot be a true relaxation [of tensions], there is not and cannot be a possibility of curbing imperialism [and] of safeguarding humanity against the catastrophe of nuclear war.

In various regions of the world there are hot spots where at any moment wars could quickly flare up. The most threatening spot is Cuba. The United States has not given up and will not give up its efforts to liquidate revolutionary Cuba. We should clearly realize this. [U.S. President John F.] Kennedy himself does not conceal this. Even if the USA does not commit armed aggression against Cuba directly, it has not desisted from organizing such aggression with the aid of its puppets in the countries of Latin America. It does not desist from this even in a state of complete unity within the socialist camp. Nothing could encourage the USA more and speed up its efforts to organize armed aggression against Cuba than a state of division in the socialist camp.

You, Comrade Khrushchev, as well as I, along with every other sensible person, must reject the idea that the socialist camp will use Soviet nuclear missiles in defense of Cuba. That would mean unleashing a devastating nuclear war. In case of an attack against Cuba, the socialist camp is not in a position to lend it military assistance. At the same time, we also well understand that if imperialism crushes revolutionary Cuba through military aggression and the socialist camp reacts only with protest rallies, its authority in the world especially the authority of the Soviet Union would be seriously undermined. Although we should not use nuclear missiles in defense of Cuba, we should also not limit ourselves in the event of an invasion to mere protests. Today, we should have already worked out a plan for counter-blows in other regions of the world. Whenever and whoever might carry it out, two states should agree upon it on behalf of the entire socialist camp: the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

The USA should be aware that it will have to pay something for Cuba. Only this will prevent it from renewing its aggression against Cuba, and not any fear that the Soviet Union will use its missiles in [Cuba's] defense. The USA might still decide on good grounds that even on the basis of today's relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China not to speak of the situation that will arise in the event of a further inflammation of those relations it will not have to give up anything for the liquidation of revolutionary Cuba.

I am not worried that the Chinese Communist Party will want to go too far in agreeing to a plan for counter-blows in the event of an invasion of Cuba. We should count instead on great caution on its part. Throwing out slogans that call for the granting of assistance to countries struggling with imperialism something that China has not been lavish with is a different matter than entering into concrete obligations and granting assistance in practice.

An understanding with the Chinese Communist Party on the basis of a sensible compromise is thus necessary from every point of view. I assume that if the Soviet Union will consult with and gain the approval of the People's Republic of China for its more important political initiatives in the international arena, the Chinese Communist Party will desist from its propaganda and attacks against the CPSU and that a closer point of view can be achieved with regard to a number of controversial questions. It will not be possible to achieve a full unity of views. Ideological differences will remain for a long time, but they should be kept within limits that will not tear apart the unity of the socialist camp.

I am not outlining a platform here for an understanding with the Communist Party of China. It can be worked out later. The most important thing is to move towards a halt in public and direct ideological polemics even if everyone maintains for a certain time their own views on controversial issues. We must voice our views in a positive form, without polemics with other parties, and even more without attacking other parties,

whether by direct or indirect means. The likelihood exists that over time the differences will diminish or become outdated, and this will permit a return to ideological unity.

I do not believe that any attempt or form of mediation on the part of a party that does not share the CCP's ideological views will be positive for improving relations between the CPSU and CCP. It would be best if the CPSU itself would present a concrete initiative on this matter.

Dear Comrade Khrushchev,

In this letter, I have presented you with my thoughts, which have grown out of my deep concern regarding our common goal of socialism. Please weigh them seriously, especially since they come from your sincere friend. Between us and between the parties of our two countries there are no ideological differences. But none of us can say of ourselves that we are free of errors. Please take this fact also into account as you weigh my thoughts presented to you in this letter.

I send you my sincerest greetings and wish you good health and strength in your difficult work, which bears responsibilities that are beyond words.

With communist greetings

W. Gomulka