

New Evidence on Poland in the Early Cold War

Editor's Note: This Bulletin section features essays and documents which emerged as part of CWIHP's "Stalin Project," an international effort, inaugurated last year, that aims at a comprehensive (inasmuch as that is possible) compilation of archival and other materials on Josef Stalin's personal views in and impact on Soviet foreign relations during the early Cold War. Following a workshop in Budapest (3-4 October 1997) on "European Archival Evidence on 'Stalin and the Cold War'" (co-sponsored and hosted by the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution), and a 19-20 March 1998 workshop in Moscow on "Stalin and the Cold War" (co-sponsored and hosted by the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences), CWIHP is currently seeking to establish a website database of all known and documented conversations between Stalin and foreign leaders. CWIHP is also planning further conferences on the subject. Key documents will be published in this and future issues of the Bulletin as well as on the CWIHP website (cwiwp.si.edu). The following contributions by Andrzej Werblan, Andrzej Paczkowski and Krzysztof Persak focus on new evidence on Soviet-Polish relations in the Stalin era.

The Conversation between Władysław Gomułka and Josef Stalin on 14 November 1945

By Andrzej Werblan

In November 1945, Władysław Gomułka¹ was Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish Worker's Party (PPR) (and had been since November 1943). Soon afterwards, in December 1945, during the first PPR congress, the post of General Secretary was created and entrusted to Gomułka. He held that post until August 1948. In his memoirs, written in the seventies after he retired, Gomułka writes that, after the creation of People's Poland at the end of World War II, PPR leaders frequently paid unofficial visits to Stalin.² Not many archival traces of these visits and conversations have survived. The Polish scholar Krzysztof Persak³ presented Polish archival information on this topic during a conference in Budapest, organized by the Cold War International History Project, on 3-4 October 1997.⁴ Some additional information about meetings between Stalin and Polish leaders in 1944-48 can be found in a recently published Russian documentary collection.⁵ Prof. Albina F. Noskova, the co-editor of this collection, told me that many of the meetings between Stalin and the leaders of "people's democracies" and Communist parties were not recorded (no minutes were taken) during those years. As a rule, it appears, no minutes were taken of meetings conducted at the dachas in Sochi or the Crimea, where Stalin spent long fall and winter months.

The memorandum of conversation with Stalin published below was prepared by Władysław Gomułka and found in his private papers. Most probably Gomułka himself wrote the memorandum after the conversation took place. Two factors support that interpretation. First, the text with the handwritten (and, as it turns out, erroneous) note "third quarter of 1945" was found in his private papers; second, the style of the memo, is very characteristic of Gomułka. As was the case in his other reports of talks with Stalin which have survived, he only noted Stalin's statements and completely omitted his own.

By a fortunate coincidence, information about the

very same conversation can be found in the above-mentioned collection of Russian documents, in a letter dated 14 November 1945 written by Stalin to Molotov relating the conversation with Gomułka and Hilary Minc.⁶ The letter was meant for "The Four," that is, probably for the few closest associates of Stalin at the time. The memo is laconic, consisting of the list of questions asked by the Poles and short, thesis-like answers. When one compares their subjects, it is clear that both Gomułka's memo and Stalin's letter refer to the same conversation. Gomułka's description is more detailed, but the order in which he relates the topics of conversation differs from Stalin's note. By the end, Gomułka also writes in abbreviated form, using short sentences, including digressions and unrelated issues mentioned by Stalin during the conversation, as well as during the dinner which usually followed such conversations. From Stalin's memo we learn that the conversation took place on 14 November 1945 and that Minc participated in it as well, but no minutes were taken.

The content of both documents indicates that the reason for the conversation was the new situation in Poland following the Moscow Conference (17-21 June 1945) and the formation of the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN — Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności). The main problems about which the Polish leaders consulted Stalin concerned relations with the Polish Peasants' Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL), which was formed in September 1945 under the leadership of Stanisław Mikołajczyk⁷ and which appeared to be the first political party completely independent of the PPR, as well as the relations with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which also gained independence under those circumstances. Another important part of the conversation related to the approaching PPR Congress (6-12 December 1945) and the plans for parliamentary elections. International problems also consumed a relatively large

part of the conversation. These included the question of receiving loans from Western countries, the dispute with Czechoslovakia over Cieszyn [Těšín], reparations from Germany, and the stationing of Soviet troops in Poland. Interestingly enough, the PPR leadership did not heed all of Stalin's "advice" and apparently did not treat his suggestions as obligatory. For example, against Stalin's suggestion, parliamentary elections were postponed until January 1947. The change of premier did not take place either: Edward Osóbka-Morawski stayed on until the election. Contrary to Stalin's advice, Gomułka took the post of Minister of Regained [Western] Territories. The fact that this question was brought up proves that the conversation in question had to take place in the fourth quarter of 1945, since the plan to create a Ministry of Regained Territories emerged only in October.

Gomułka's memo and Stalin's letter are published without any changes, in the same exact form as the originals. The footnotes to Gomułka's memo were written by A. Werblan.

Document No. 1

Gomułka's memorandum of a conversation with Stalin

1. The political situation in Poland

third quarter of 1945⁸

On the PPS [Polish Socialist Party]. You are wrong if you think that Morawski⁹ 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 reliable information that everything that the English ambassador does in Warsaw has been agreed upon with Mikołajczyk. Mikołajczyk 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 Mikołajczyk.

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

Mikołajczyk, 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. Thorez¹⁰ 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. Mikołajczyk 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. Lange¹¹ 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 favor. 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's¹² 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 Józef] Piłsudski's¹³ 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,¹⁴ a close associate of [Feliks] Dzierzynski¹⁵ and a testimony of Dabal.¹⁶ Do not invite any foreign parties to the Congress. If somebody were to come from the CPSU, 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 certain 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 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 Władysław] Sikorski.¹⁷ 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. Unszlicht¹⁸ 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 receive from them six billion at 2.5% [interest] 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-lease¹⁹ 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 [Soviet Marshal] 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. Wiesław [Gomułka] 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 [Gomułka] 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 in the Western Territories.²⁰ 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: *sovkhoz*]. We give the workers housing and some land, between half a hectare and one 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 petit bourgeoisie. This is incorrect and not Marxist. Great capital creates a craftsmen-and petit-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 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 finished 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 Lebedev²¹ that, on the basis of his conversation with Molotov, Bierut drew conclusions 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 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,²² 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 [Silesia]. 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 but 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 Białogród [Belgrade] 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's²³ captives [POW's — trans.] he had fourteen thousand shot. The English demanded that we influence Tito in order to postpone the election once Szubaszic²⁴ 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.²⁵ Stalin was on the front line at the time. Dzierzynski 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 [U.S. Ambassador Averell] Harriman at Sochi.
3. Truman removed [former senior Roosevelt aide Harry]

Hopkins.

4. Freedom of the press—Lenin treated like a German spy by the bourgeois press.
5. Associated Press and Timoshenko²⁶—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.

[Source: *Gomułka papers, in possession of Gomułka Family, translated by Anna Elliot-Zielinska.*]

Document No. 2

Conversation of J.V. Stalin with W. Gomułka and G. Mintz regarding the situation in Poland

Distributed to V. Molotov, L. Beria, G. Malenkov, A. Mikoian, and A. Vyshinskii.

Moscow

14 November 1945

SECRET

To Com. MOLOTOV for *chetverka* [apparently, Stalin's inner circle of four,²⁷ which probably consisted of the persons listed above except for Vyshinskii].

The discussion was not being transcribed (the Poles deemed it unnecessary to make a record of conversation), thus I am sending you the contents of the discussion in the form of questions and answers.

QUESTION FROM POLES. Has there been a change in the Soviet leaders' attitude toward Poland and, in particular, toward [the] Polish Communists?

ANSWER FROM COM. STALIN. It has not changed and could not change. Our attitude toward Poles and Polish Communists is as friendly as before.

QUESTION. Should we adopt a law for nationalizing large industry and banks?

ANSWER. Following [Czechoslovak President Eduard] Beneš' adoption of such a law, the time has come when such a law should be adopted in Poland as well.

QUESTION. Should we allow foreign capital to be brought to Poland in the form of concessions or in some other form?

ANSWER. This matter is very serious, and it must be carefully examined by the Poles themselves.

Note: The Poles have not said that they have rejected the Soviet proposal for joint enterprises. I have the impression that the Poles would not mind making concessions to foreign capital in this area as well.

QUESTION. Should we adopt the PPS [Polish Socialist Party] proposal for repealing grain procurement and announcing a free market without price regulations?

ANSWER. However regrettable it may be, sooner or later

the Poles will have to take this step, since, under a non-Soviet system and in the absence of war, it is not possible to maintain for long a system of grain procurement and price regulations.

QUESTION. Would I object if the Poles accepted a loan from the Americans or the English, and would I allow this loan to be accepted under the conditions that would more or less limit Poland's utilization of the loan?

ANSWER. The loan can be accepted, but without any types of conditions that would limit Poland's rights in the utilization of the loan.

QUESTION. Can we conclude a pact of mutual assistance with France?

ANSWER. You can, but it must fully conform to the spirit of the mutual assistance pact concluded between Poland and the USSR.

QUESTION. Should we pursue further the question of Těšín [Cieszyn] and can the USSR support Poland in the negotiations on Těšín with Czechoslovakia?

ANSWER. I don't advise you to pursue this question further, since, after receiving Silesian coking coal, Poland no longer has an argument for the transfer of Těšín to the Poles, in light of which the USSR cannot support the Poles in this matter. It would be better to eliminate quickly this contentious issue with Czechoslovakia, limit the matter to the resettlement of Těšín Poles in Poland, and re-establish good relations with Czechoslovakia. On the question of resettling Těšín Poles in Poland, the USSR can support the Poles in the negotiations with Czechoslovakia.

QUESTION. Should representatives of the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks] be invited to the PPR [Polish Workers Party] Congress that will be taking place in the near future?

ANSWER. It would be better not to invite them, so that opponents would not be able to say that the PPR Congress is taking place under the control of the VKP(b).

QUESTION. Can we announce at the PPR Congress that the PPR is a successor of the line and tradition of the Polish Communist Party, which had been liquidated even prior to the war?

ANSWER. This should not be done because the Polish Communist Party has in actuality become agents of Piłsudchiks, even though opponents have painted it as agents of the VKP(b). It would be better to announce at the PPR Congress that the PPR is a new party and that it is not tied to the line and traditions of the Polish Communist Party.

QUESTION. Are we correct in thinking that it would be expedient to postpone general elections in Poland for another year?

ANSWER. I think that it would be better to hold elections no later than spring of 1946, since further postponement of elections would be very difficult both due to internal and international reasons.

QUESTION. Osóbka-Morawski is acting badly. If he does not improve in the near future, we would like to replace him prior to the organization of the elections with Mr.

Lange (the current Polish ambassador to the USA, a moderate PPS-ist, and well disposed, in the Poles' opinion, toward Communists). What can you suggest?

ANSWER. If you have no other option and if it is impossible at present to put forth the candidacy of Bierut (the Poles believe this combination to be inexpedient), then you can make an attempt with Lange, with the goal of using Lange to dismantle the PPS. Consult with Wanda Lvovna, who is closely familiar with Lange.

The rest of the discussion dealt with questions regarding the shipment of 30 tons of seed grain from the Rokossowski reserves and fulfilling the Poles' request for railroad transport. But you already know about these matters.

STALIN

[Source: *Archive of the President, Russian Federation (APRF)*, fond 45, opis 1, delo 355, listy 8-11; published in *Vostochnaia Yevropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov [Eastern Europe in the Documents of the Russian Archives 1944-1953]*, vol. 1 (1944-48), ed. T.V. Volokitina et. al., (Moscow: *Siberian Chronograph*, 1997), pp. 301-303; translated by Daniel Rozas]

Andrzej Werblan is Professor Emeritus of History at the Silesian University in Katowice, former Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, and Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament.

¹ Władysław Gomułka (1905-1966): pseudonym "Wiesław"; Polish Communist leader; General Secretary of the Polish Workers' Party, 1943-1948; First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, 1956-1970.

² Władysław Gomułka, *Diaries*, edited by Andrzej Werblan (Warsaw, 1994), vol. II, p. 516.

³ Krzysztof Persak: Junior research fellow at the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences. His current project deals with the Polish Communist Party Central Committee's organization and functioning as well as Polish Communist elite after 1944.

⁴ Krzysztof Persak, "Polish Sources On Stalin's Foreign Policy," Paper presented at the CWIHP workshop "European Archival Evidence on Stalin and the Cold War," Budapest, 3-4 October 1997.

⁵ *Vostochnaia Yevropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov 1944-53 gg.* [Eastern Europe in the documents of the Russian Archives], vol. I. 1944-48 gg. (Moscow-Novosibirsk: "Siberian Chronograph," 1997).

⁶ Hilary Minc (1905-1974): Communist politician; member of the PWP/PUWP Politburo, 1944-1956; deputy Prime Minister, responsible for the economy. At the time a member of the Politburo of the KCPPr and Minister of Industry in the TRJN.

⁷ Stanisław Mikołajczyk (1902-1966): Peasants' Party leader; Prime Minister of the Polish Government in Exile, 1943-44;

leader of the opposition Polish Peasants' Party and deputy Prime Minister, 1945-47; 1947 emigration to the U.S.

⁸ Words "third quarter of 1945" added in hand on the original.

⁹ Edward Osóbka-Morawski, premier of TRJN (Temporary Government of National Unity).

¹⁰ Maurice Thorez, General Secretary of the Communist Party of France.

¹¹ Oskar Lange, a well-known economist, active in the PPS and PUWP, was a professor at the University of Chicago during the war.

¹² 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 protégé. Did not return to Poland after 1945.

¹³ Marshall Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935): Polish national leader, architect of Polish independence in 1918, President 1918-1922 and Premier 1926-27, 1930.

¹⁴ Jan Sosnowski, active in SDKPiL, lived in the USSR after 1917. He died in the purges of 1937-38.

¹⁵ 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).

¹⁶ Tomasz Dąbal, one of the leaders of the KPP, died in the purges in 1938.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Józef Unszlicht, active in SDKPiL, lived in the USSR after 1917, died in purges in 1937-38.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ State-run farms.

²¹ Viktor Lebedev, USSR Ambassador in Warsaw, 1945-52.

²² Nikolai Abramov, rear-admiral, a Russian officer who for five months (August-December 1945) was Chief of Staff of the Polish navy.

²³ Ante Pavelić, a Croatian politician and soldier who collaborated with the Germans during World War II.

²⁴ Ivan Šubašić, 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.

²⁵ The Provisional 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.

²⁶ Semyon Timoshenko, a USSR marshal.

²⁷ For a discussion of the evolution of Stalin's inner circles of advisors see Iu. N. Zhukov "Bor'ba za vlast' v rukovodstve SSSR v 1945-1952 godakh," [The Struggle for Power in the Leadership of the USSR, 1945-52], *Voprosy Istorii* 1 (1995), pp. 23-39.

The Polish Contribution to the Victory of the “Prague Coup” in February 1948

By Andrzej Paczkowski

In the last phase of World War II, and during the first years after the war, Polish-Czechoslovak relations were, to use the euphemistic language of diplomacy, cool and sometimes even tense. The source of this tension was a conflict which had started in 1918 over part of Těšín (Cieszyn), Silesia (also known as Zaolzie) as well as the newly born territorial dispute over the division of German Lower Silesia, which eventually had fallen to Poland. The Polish and Czechoslovak Communists also became involved in these conflicts. Although both sides declared their internationalism, the communist parties were most unyielding in presenting their territorial demands; in part because of the necessity to strengthen their legitimacy as the defenders of national (or state) interests and in part to show themselves to be as good defenders as other political parties. This was particularly obvious in the case of the Polish Communists, who came to power by force. The Czechoslovak Communists, who traditionally had been quite influential, however also had to avoid being outmatched by the “Benešniks.” In the end, under pressure from Stalin, a compromise was reached and a treaty of “friendship and cooperation” was signed in March 1947.

Cool relations between the two countries did not mean that relations between the Communist parties were equally bad. Perhaps they lacked the spontaneous cordiality with which, for example, Yugoslav leader Josip Tito was treated in Poland, but Poles sincerely worried that Prague was “lagging behind” the rest of Central Europe in its march towards “people’s democracy.” They, of course, avoided public criticism of their Czech and Slovak comrades, but growing Polish impatience was expressed by some of the more orthodox activists in some internal documents. For example, the Polish consul in Moravská Ostrava stated with regret in a 1947 report that “the superstition of formal democracy is still deeply rooted in the heart of the [Czechoslovak] com-party [Communist Party].” However, he consoled himself by saying that “the growing consciousness and combative spirit of the working masses is producing more healthy trends.”¹ The fact that it was only in Czechoslovakia that the Communists had not yet gained full control over the situation was inconvenient for everybody, including Moscow.² However, Warsaw probably felt most directly what was happening on the other side of the Polish southern border. Among other reasons, this was because Czechoslovakia under President Edvard Beneš did not constitute a tight enough barrier between Poland and the West. Moreover, Polish Communists, who were more and more determined to achieve “organic unification” with, or,

in fact, absorption of, the Socialists, were concerned with the “bad example” being given by the Czechoslovak Social Democrats to their Polish counterparts. Particularly after the Brno congress of November 1947, activists who preferred to collaborate with non-Communist partners and President Beneš, rather than with Communist premier, Klement Gottwald, played an important role in the party leadership. In addition, Bohumil Laušman, the newly elected chairman of the Social Democratic Party, was allegedly a “centrist.” These trends could potentially have mobilized those Polish Socialists who were hesitant to fall into the open arms of Communist leaders Bolesław Bierut and Władysław Gomułka.

It is therefore not surprising that Warsaw was seriously interested in the elections planned in Czechoslovakia for May 1948. At the end of January 1948, during one of the meetings of the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR) Politburo, “it was decided to propose to the CPCz [Czechoslovak Communist Party] a meeting during the coming two weeks to discuss the question of the election.”³ On February 11, that is, when the government crisis in Prague began, the same body decided on the “guidelines” for talks with the Czechoslovak Communists. These concerned “a) [the question of] taking a tougher stance against reactionary and collaborationist forces; b) the question of approach to the Social Democrats and tactics towards the Socialist Left in Czechoslovakia; and c) the question of potential political aid in organizational and technical spheres [in the election campaign].”⁴ On February 14, after the meeting, Gomułka presented a report to members of the Politburo. The recorder did not mention whether he had raised the question of “taking the tougher stance against reactionary forces,” but the topic must have been discussed. One way or another, the Polish Communists intended to offer help. On February 13, as the situation in Prague intensified, the embassy sent a coded message suggesting that “due to the projected internal and political changes . . . [it would be] desirable for a delegation from Poland to participate in the Congress of Trade Unions [which was to take place] on February 22.”⁵ Three days later, however, Warsaw received a telegram saying that Gottwald “decided not to invite the delegation,” since “questions of internal politics will be discussed” during the Congress, “and the presence of foreigners could be interpreted as interfering in Czechoslovak internal affairs.”⁶ (As is well known, the Congress of Trade Unions became one of the main instruments of pressure on Beneš.)

Although the Czechoslovak Communists completely controlled the situation in the trade unions, the Social

Democrats were still their “weak point.” A lot depended on their stance, since it was only together with the Social Democrats that the CPCz had a majority in the Parliament. Without the collaboration of the Social Democrats, not just Zdeněk Fierlinger’s “Left,” but above all Laušman’s “center,” the chances for a quick and “peaceful” elimination of political opponents were close to zero. In this matter Polish comrades could help, since the leadership of the Polish Socialist Party consisted of conformists who were ready to go quite far in order to show their loyalty in the fight for the “unity of the workers’ movement,” and some of them were simply too dependant from the Communists. After receiving the news that Laušman was inclined to cooperate with Gottwald’s opponents, Gomułka immediately conducted the necessary dialogue with Józef Cyrankiewicz,⁷ the premier and unquestioned leader of the compliant Polish Socialists, and on the evening of the same day, February 20, the top leadership of the PPS decided to send a party delegation to Prague. Their goal was to “potentially influence” Czechoslovak colleagues “in the spirit of leftist-Socialist and revolutionary politics.”⁸ Also on February 20, the Polish Foreign Ministry ordered Aleksander Krajewski, chargé d’affaires in Prague, to “immediately go to Gottwald” and inform him about the planned departure for Prague of the four PPS delegates at noon the next day. An “immediate answer” was requested as to whether the “CPCz had any reservations with respect to this initiative, and the CPCz was asked to provide guidelines for talks with the Social Democrats.”⁹ This time, the answer from Prague was completely positive. Gottwald asked the Poles to meet with the Social Democrats (“particularly the left ones”) and to press “them and Laušman not to leave the government under any circumstances or to align with the reactionary forces.”¹⁰

In the late afternoon of February 21, four Polish politicians arrived in Prague. They belonged to the very top PPS leadership, although Cyrankiewicz, the “Number One” man, was not among them. It could have been impossible for Cyrankiewicz to come to Prague, since the arrival of the premier in office would give the delegation an official and government-level character. All the delegates were members of the Central Executive Committee (Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, hereafter CKW), which was the highest executive organ of the party, corresponding more or less to the Politburo in Communist parties. Kazimierz Rusinek, head of the CKW (formally the Number Two man in the PPS), led the delegation. He was accompanied by Adam Rapacki, a member of the Political Commission of the CKW and Minister of Navigation in Cyrankiewicz’s government, who later became famous on the international scene as Poland’s foreign minister from 1956-1968. The other two members of the delegation were CKW members Stefan Arski and Henryk Jabłoński. There is no need to discuss their actions, since the extensive report published below relates it in great detail. It seems to be reliable, although it

is noticeable that in Czechoslovak sources known to me, there is no mention of the Poles’ stay in Prague or of the many talks they conducted with Social Democrats as well as with Communists.

After returning to Warsaw the delegation submitted the following report, copies of which are found in Polish Workers’ Party records as well as in those of the Foreign Ministry. Cyrankiewicz passed one copy to the Soviet embassy in Warsaw, and Ambassador Viktor Lebedev sent its shortened version to Moscow.¹¹ In the memo accompanying the note, Ambassador Lebedev “ironically pointed out that the PPS delegates strikingly (*jawnno*) overestimated the importance of their mission.”¹² I am not able to judge whether and to what degree the ambassador was right, but I hope the historians investigating the 1948 “Prague coup” will do that in time. It is beyond question, however, that the Poles genuinely wanted to help Gottwald and their Socialist comrades in the efficient elimination of the “reactionary forces.” It is also possible to think that it was important to Cyrankiewicz to present the report to the Soviet representative in Warsaw, since this was a way for the PPS to stress its loyalty to Stalin (and Communists in general) and prove that it could be useful. At the same time, the observation of the mechanics of the “Prague coup,” the ruthlessness and effectiveness of Gottwald’s actions, definitely influenced the way in which the Polish Socialists assessed their chances to resist the “unification” plan pushed by Gomułka. The PPS leadership realized that if they did not give up “willingly” they would be forced to surrender under worse conditions. Less than two weeks after the victory of the Czechoslovak Communists, Roman Zambrowski, one of the PPR leaders, said that, “new [developments] in Socialist parties in the West and in the countries of People’s Democracy . . . were the reason that we entered a new stage of relations between the PPR and PPS. We consider this period to be a period of accelerated ripening of organic unity. The international situation has changed so much in the last few days that in order not to be left behind [the events] we need to start moving faster as well.”¹³ Gomułka sent congratulations to Gottwald, and Cyrankiewicz and Rusinek sent a congratulatory letter to Laušman, expressing “a particular joy about the closing of the unified ranks of the Czechoslovak working class and consolidating the Social Democratic Party along the leftist-socialist, revolutionary political line.”¹⁴ By helping Gottwald and Fierlinger they were adding a brick to the Sovietization of Poland and signing the death sentence for their own party.

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Dr. Andrzej Paczkowski is the deputy director of the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.

¹ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter called AMSZ), Warsaw, Group VI, file 183, packet 15, p.58.

² E.g., in January 1948 in the Central Committee [CC] Department of Foreign Policy of the All-Union Communist Party (b) [CPSU] a study was prepared in which reservations were expressed numerous times concerning the fact that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) “had not [yet] organized a decisive attack against the reactionary forces.” Quoted from G.N. Murashko et al., eds., *Vostochnaya Evropa v dokumentakh rossijskich archivov 1944-1953*, vol. 1, 1944-1948, p. 742, n. 2.

³ *Archiwum Akt Nowych* (further on called AAN) of KC PZPR, 295/-5, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 17.

⁵ AMSZ, Telegram Section, file 153, packet 15, coded message no. 1693.

⁶ *Ibid.*, coded message no. 1817.

⁷ Murashko et al., *Vostochnaya Evropa*, doc. 261, p. 769.

⁸ See the document published below. This document has been used by Stanisław Ciesielski in his article, “PPS wobec wydarzeń lutowych w Czechosłowacji w 1948 r. Delegacja PPS w Pradze” (“The PPS and the February events in Czechoslovakia in 1948: The PPS delegation in Prague”), in *Wrocławskie studia z dziejów najnowszych, Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* 1274 (Wrocław, 1992), pp. 237-251. However, Ciesielski did not get to other documents, either from the MSZ, PPR, or WKP (b).

⁹ AMSZ, Telegram Sections, file 154, packet 16, coded message no. 2132.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, file 153, coded message no. 2011.

¹¹ Published in Murashko et al., *Vostochnaya Evropa*, doc. no. 262, p. 770-775.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 775, n. 6.

¹³ AAN, KC PZPR, 295/VII-4 (protocol of the meeting of CC PPR Secretariat of 8 March 1948).

¹⁴ *Robotnik*, No. 57, 27 February 1948.

Document

Report of the Special Action of the Polish Socialist Party in Prague, 21-25 February 1948

In accordance with the resolution of the Political Commission and General Secretariat of the Central Executive Committee (CKW) of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), made late on the night of 20 February 1948, Com. Kazimierz Rusinek, Adam Rapacki, Henryk Jabłoński, and Stefan Arski were delegated to go to Prague. This decision was made after a thorough analysis of the political situation in Czechoslovakia brought on by a cabinet crisis there. The goal of the delegation was to inform the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party (ČSD) about the basic stance of the PPS and possibly to influence the ČSD Central Committee in the spirit of leftist-socialist and revolutionary politics. The motive behind the decision of the Political Commission and General Secretariat was the fear that, from the leftist-socialist point of view, the situation at the heart of ČSD after the Brno Congress was taking an unfavorable shape. It was feared that the Czechoslovak Party, led by rightist elements, might easily be led astray during the present crisis to opportunism and be tempted to play the role of a

“third force.”

The PPS Central Executive Committee considered this turn of events in the heart of ČSD to be particularly dangerous because of the threat to people’s democracy in Poland’s immediate neighborhood. The political crisis in Czechoslovakia was unanimously judged to be an action provoked by local and international reactionary forces in order to transform Czechoslovakia into the object of direct attack by the American capitalist counteroffensive.

The delegation was given political instructions based on the above basic stance of the PPS Central Executive Committee and flew to Prague on Saturday, February 21.

After arriving in Prague, the delegation considered it necessary to conduct preliminary talks with factors [i.e., people—translator’s note] who could provide it [with] objective information about the present political situation. Since possible further active political measures depended on gaining an objective view of the state of affairs at the moment, a series of informational conversations were conducted that same day.

The general description of the situation was provided to the delegation first by Com. Krajewski, Chargé d’Affaires in Prague.

Subsequently, conversations were held with Com. Rudolf Slanský, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) and Jaromír Dolanský, the Minister of Finance and a member of the KSČ Central Committee. Finally, a long conversation with Com. Zdeněk Fierlinger also took place.

After these preliminary talks the delegation gained precise picture of the situation and the basic stances of the KSČ and the ČSD left.

In the general outline the situation was as follows:

The political crisis was directly caused by the resignation of the ministers of three right-wing parties: the National Socialists (Nar-Soc) [Ed.’s note: the original Polish document uses the unusual abbreviation Nar-Soc for the National Socialist Party: the Československá Strana Národně socialistická, henceforth ČSNS], People’s Party (Lid) [Ed.’s note: the original Polish document uses Lid for the Czechoslovak People’s Party: the Československá Strana Lidová, henceforth ČSL] and Slovak Democrats (DS). Twelve of these ministers, led by Vice-premier [Petr] Zenkl (ČSNS), resigned as a result of a conflict over the discharge of high National Socialist police officials and their replacement by Communists. This, of course, was only a pretext, which let into the open some conflicts that had been hidden for a long time. These conflicts had been growing for a while and became inflamed as the election date approached. They had a dual economic-social and political background. The right-wing parties clearly sabotaged the further social reforms envisioned in the NF [National Front] program, which involved expanding the nationalization of all industrial enterprises employing more than fifty workers, the nationalization of wholesale trade, the introduction of a state monopoly on foreign trade, and additional land reform. The right wing

was afraid that these reforms might undermine the existing social balance to the advantage of the working classes and cut at the economic base of the propertied classes. Politically, the following elements came into play: the question of reforming the constitution, the fear of the potential electoral success of the Communists (whose rallying cry was to win 51% of seats in the next parliament), and the international situation.

There is no doubt that in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, that is, in the zone of the people's democracies, Czechoslovakia was the last link on which American capitalism was counting. After the failure of [Stanisław] Mikołajczyk in Poland and [Imre] Nagy in Hungary, American pressure focused directly on Czechoslovakia. American diplomacy counted on the possibility of making a certain breach here, thanks to the legal existence of a group of right-wing parties which openly showed their inclination to a pro-American orientation. American as well as British agencies in Czechoslovakia were very active, and American propaganda (i.e., the Voice of America) conducted a special campaign in the Czech and Slovak languages aimed at mobilizing reactionary and conservative elements. The emphasis directed at ČSNS was particularly forceful.

The political crisis developed against this general background, and at the time of the delegation's arrival it entered into a decisive stage. What was in this situation was the position of particular political factors.

President [Edvard] Beneš tried to avoid a revolutionary solution of the crisis, but all the signs led us to assume that this step of the right wing parties was taken in agreement with him. At the end of last week (February 20-21), President Beneš was already aware of the unfortunate position of the right wing and tried to ward off the crisis through a return to the *status quo ante*. In practice, this meant his refusal to accept the resignations of the right-wing ministers and his attempt to induce Premier [Klement] Gottwald to keep working with them. President Beneš dragged his decision out over the days that followed, pressing the Communists to make concessions, his goal being to restore the pre-crisis situation. Thus

President Beneš's general tactic at the time was simple temporization. At the same time, President Beneš was preparing to make a solo appearance and appeal to the nation. The military authorities began putting together a special broadcast station in Hradčany [Ed.'s note: the Castle in Prague] for that purpose.

Led by Generals [Ludvík] Svoboda and [Bohumil] Boček, the army declared, after some initial hesitation, a kind of supportive neutrality toward Gottwald's government. At the time it seemed certain that the military forces, while declaring their loyalty to President Beneš, did not want to get involved in the game. In its further deliberations, the delegation, in accordance with the opinions of comrades from the KSČ, accepted the neutrality of the army as a virtual certainty.

The right wing—the ČSNS, ČSL, and DS—were ready after the opening blows to retreat to their initial positions and let Beneš know that they were ready to go to Canossa. Their price was a return to their initial position in the government and the NF. This "compliance" of the right wing inclined Beneš to stick to the *status quo ante*—his concept of getting through the crisis.

The KSČ, from the beginning, took the position of supporting a revolutionary resolution of the crisis. The KSČ considered the crisis to have been caused by the right wing, which tried to undermine the people's democracy in Czechoslovakia by taking advantage of the parliamentary system to sabotage social reforms and realize reactionary political and social postulates. At the same time the KSČ appreciated the right wing's links to a pro-American orientation, and so decided to take up the fight and play it out so that it could once and for all make it impossible for the right wing to take any political initiative and move the balance of political forces decidedly to the left. With this goal in mind, the KSČ decided to propose the following postulates as a way of going through the crisis:

- a) Immediate acceptance by President Beneš of the resignation of the ministers;
- b) Reconstruction of the government to include ČSNN, ČSL, and Slovak Democratic representatives other than those who had resigned;
- c) Reorganization of the NF by including in addition

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to the 6 political parties, trade unions, organizations of former political prisoners and former partisans, cultural associations, and social organizations;

d) Including in the future government representatives of some of those organizations, at least of trade unions;

e) Creation of NF Action Committees as its local executive organs and factors mobilizing the worker, peasant, and white-collar masses to direct political action;

f) Purging NF parties of reactionary and conservative elements by changing the leadership of those parties, and purging, too, the party structures and press;

g) Tightening collaboration with the ČSD, which was weakened after the Brno congress, rebuilding the practically non-existent unified front, expanding the participation of the ČSD in the new government under the condition of removing from the ČSD leadership rightist elements.

The ČSD, led by centrist-rightist elements ([Bohumil] Laušman, [Blažej] Vilín) but actually controlled by the right wing (Vilín, [Václav] Majer, Bernard), took an incredibly dangerous stance from the beginning of the crisis. Although the Social Democratic ministers did not actually resign, the party took a wait-and-see attitude and adopted a pseudo-neutral position. In reality this position really became beneficial to the right wing since it made the whole game possible. The right wing counted on such a position and was not disappointed. At that stage the position taken by ČSD meant that the party wanted to hold the balance. Maintaining this pseudo-neutral position for a while enabled the right wing to play its political game, until its success allowed the ČSD to openly support “parliamentary democracy.” Seen from the outside, ČSD tactics were not devoid of comical elements. This fact is worth mentioning since it is so characteristic of the whole picture of the situation.

To wit, just after the crisis began the ČSD pasted in the window of its headquarters a large poster with a map of Czechoslovakia and a picture of a cock-fight taking place above that map. The cock on the left, marked with a red star, symbolized the Communists (and the USSR); the cock on the right stood for the right wing parties (and the USA). The sign said “Jen Klid - Nic se ne stane,” or “Just keep cool and nothing will happen.” The line taken by the party press reflected the wisdom of this poster equally by explaining to the masses that the crisis will pass if only everybody will keep cool and entrust themselves to Beneš’s protection, who in turn will take care of everything and save the NF “democracy.” As a result of the PPS delegation’s strong criticism of this kind of action, the whole window, with the poster, was covered up the following day.

The Social Democratic attitude toward the Communists was at this stage even more relentless, since the ČSD presented the KSČ with an ultimatum that it would not open any talks until the decision of Interior Minister [Václav] Nosek (KSČ) regarding the discharge of sixty Social Democratic policemen [illegible] was

recanted.

In its simplest terms, the strategy of the ČSD could be described as playing the role of a *sui generis* “third power,” wanting to go back to the *status quo ante* using methods somewhat different than those used by the right wing.

The hopelessness of ČSD tactics and strategy was deepened even more by the actual development of the situation in the country. The crisis caused an undoubtedly revolutionary mood among the masses, who, under KSČ leadership, clearly pushed for the correct solution. Without any reservations, the working class followed the path indicated by the KSČ and accepted all of its postulates as its own. The rank-and-file of the ČSD created a unified front with the KSČ masses. The Social Democratic Party was absolutely unaware of the situation, did not perceive its revolutionary character, and consoled itself thinking that it was just an ordinary little parliamentary incident that could be dealt with through hallway negotiations. The correct attitude was not considered at all. The best proof of this was their quibbling over the sixty policemen, which took place amidst the most serious crisis Czechoslovakia experienced since the liberation.

It is very telling that at the large “manifestation” in February (Saturday, February 21) at the Old Town Market Square in Prague, when Kousová-Petranková, a Social Democratic activist, appeared next to President Gottwald, she was greeted by the crowd with a great ovation for the Social Democratic and the unified front. This was the best testimony of the real mood of the Communist and Socialist masses. The rightist ČSD leadership reacted by immediately kicking Kousova and Dr. Nonec (the left-wing Social Democratic leader in the Prague ČSD organization) out of the Party.

The pivotal character of the ČSD’s political stance had to do with the fact that together with the KSČ it held a 52% majority in the parliament for the workers’ parties and that [by changing] its stance it was capable of overcoming the crisis and bringing victory to the left wing. Had it taken a clear stance from the beginning, the right wing would not have dared to provoke the crisis, knowing that it had no chance even in the parliament. However, the right wing was correct in its judgment of the influence of the Brno congress on the ČSD’s evolution and politics.

Having recapitulated the situation, the delegation, in agreement with Com. Fierlinger and Com. Slánský and Dolanský (KSČ), decided on a plan of action.

On Sunday, February 22, Com. Rusínek, the head of the delegation, officially communicated with the leadership of the ČSD and asked for a meeting with the decision-making people in the party. Com. Laušman invited the delegation to a conference with the executive department of the ČSD in the afternoon hours.

The conference took place in the building where the offices of the ČSD General Secretariat are located. It fell in two parts with a two-hour break. During the first part

Laušman, Vilín, and Bernard were present. During the second part, Vilín, Bernard, [Ludmila] Jankovcová and a few more comrades who were members of the Central Committee, mainly from the centrist and rightist wings, were present.

Com. Rusinek was the first one to speak at the conference. He explained the purpose of the delegation's visit and stressed the common interests of the people's democracies in defending the gains of the proletariat of those countries. Com. Rusinek pointed out the danger of dollar-diplomacy pressure on the people's democracies, and drew attention to the increased offensive of American capitalism, to the danger of the war camp's intrigues and the necessity of strengthening the collaborative ties between the left-wing socialists from the people's democracies and the Socialist left in the West. He mentioned the influence of the Czech crisis on the struggle of Western European workers, particularly in Italy. Com. Rusinek also pointed out the special connection between the interests of Poland and Czechoslovakia and to the negative results of the prolonged crisis, which could only negatively influence the effectiveness of resolutions reached during the Prague conference [between] the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Com. Arski followed by characterizing the international situation, its direct connection to the Czechoslovak crisis, and the negative repercussions of the rightist provocation. He stressed the role of the leftist Socialists in the struggle for a unified front on the international scale, and he also explained the goals and methods of American politics, the role of the USSR in creating a world peace front, and the necessity to overcome the Czechoslovak crisis in the spirit of revolutionary postulates of the Socialist left and the Communists. Com. Arski conducted a detailed analysis of the flaws of the official ČSD leadership position, and particularly of the dangerous results of "sitting on the fence" and playing "the third force." Com. Rapacki conducted a precise analysis of the current political situation in Czechoslovakia and indicated the Socialist possibilities of overcoming the crisis. During his speech, Com. Rapacki was very precise about what practical stance the ČSD should take in negotiations with the Communist Party and stressed the advantages the party might obtain in really increasing its influence in the government.

Com. Jabłonski added to the statements of other comrades from the PPS, analyzing the role of the right wing in the crisis and the danger of facilitating its games.

At that stage, the tactics of the delegation were designed to achieve the following postulates:

1. To induce the ČSD leadership to immediately start negotiations with KSČ;
2. [To induce the ČSD] to give up its neutral stance and move to the left side of the barricade;
3. [To induce the ČSD] clearly to threaten Beneš and the right wing that if they continue to resist, the ČSD will

unconditionally support the KSČ;

4. [To induce the ČSD] to relax repression against leftist Socialists;

5. [To induce the ČSD] to abandon its wait-and-see attitude and start actively to participate in the current conflict on the side of the mobilized working masses;

6. To induce the ČSD leadership to recognize the revolutionary character of the situation and draw the correct conclusions;

7. To undermine the self-confidence of the rightist activists of the ČSD, [illegible] them morally and threaten them with the repercussions of resisting the revolutionary wave; and

8. To put a wedge between the right wing and the center, pulling the hesitant elements over to the left.

These postulates have to a great degree since been realized:

1. During the conference Com. Jankovcová (Minister of Industry) clearly expressed support for the left;

2. Com. Vojta Erban subsequently moved to the left;

3. Com. Laušman kept his neutral attitude, not engaging himself on the side of Vilín and Bernard;

4. Some of the participants by the end of the meeting clearly separated themselves from the right and moved to the center;

5. During the meeting Vilín, Bernard and the people closest to them became clearly isolated from the rest of more or less undecided elements.

The conference was very important, as the following day the plenum of the ČSD Central Committee [CC] and the destruction of the center-right majority in its CC had a decisive influence on the further development of events at the heart of ČSD.

After the talks with the ČSD Central Committee, the delegation again contacted the representatives of KSČ and informed them about the situation at the heart of the ČSD. Then Com. Rusinek made personal contact with opposition elements in the heart of the ČSNS Party and was assured that they would immediately contact President Beneš and express opposition to Zenkl's directions during the internal party conference. The KSČ and the left wing of the ČSD were informed of this measure.

In the evening the delegation participated in the meeting of the leaders of the left wing ČSD faction, led by Com. Fierlinger. Com. Jankovcová, Jungvirtová, John, Evžen Erban, and [Jiří] Hájek, among others, participated in the meeting.

Tactics were established for the plenum the following day, rules for the Socialist-leftist way of overcoming the crisis were discussed, and the draft of a political declaration was discussed. The declaration was to be made by the left in case the rightist elements took control of the CC plenary meeting. After establishing this plan of action, the delegation got in touch with Warsaw and determined further guidelines for actions the following day.

On the day of the CC Plenum, Com. Rusinek conducted further talks with the National Socialists, and

during the luncheon hours a meeting with a group of ČSD members took place. The meeting was initiated by Bernard. Present were representatives of the extreme right, led by Majer and Bernard [illegible word]. In spite of that fact, after a lengthy discussion two participants assured the PPS delegation of their readiness to speak at the Plenum meeting in the spirit of our [the delegation's] postulates.

Thanks to the account of the Plenum given by our leftist friends, we were able to conceive of the meeting as a gradual tilting from an extreme right stance in the morning to a more conciliatory attitude later in the day, with a great many delegates moving to a center-left position. Already at noon Laušman decided that the repression of the left wing forced by Majer was a mistake. By the evening, the left was finally able to win a majority for a very important postulate: to send a party delegation to the reorganization meeting of National Front, where decisive resolutions were to be reached about how to solve the crisis. All day long the delegation's efforts were focused on trying to win over as many CC members as possible in order to win that decision, since we considered this decision to be a breakthrough in the overall attitude of the party leadership. Our judgment turned out to be the right one, since from that moment the disintegration of the right began. In spite of the right wing's votes, a majority could still be found to support the decision. Vojta Erban's move to the left played a major role in this.

The CC plenary meeting was postponed until the following day. The development of events had gained a sudden momentum by then. In response to the appeal of the Employee Council, a one-hour general strike took place. Demonstrations of right-wing students took place in the streets, that [line missing]. At the same time, National Front Action Committees began to take action all over the country, aiming at Communist as well as Social Democratic oriented workers.

From the morning of February 24 on, decisive events took place also in the leadership of Social Democratic organizations. Around 10 A.M. a group of leftist ČSNS representatives, led by the "expelled" Com. Němec, seized the offices of the General Secretariat on Příkopý. At noon the Prague organization turned itself over to the disposal of the party left led by Com. Fierlinger. The Brno organization did the same and similar news started coming during the day from other provinces as well.

Therefore the CC plenum continued in the light of *faits accomplis*. At the suggestion of Com. Gottwald, the ČSD Central Committee decided to open talks on the reconstruction of the government and the National Front. However, the representatives of the ČSD took a passive stance in these talks, registering the conditions presented by the KSČ to present them to their own Central Committee. The occupation of the offices of the Central Committee made it difficult for the normal functioning of the ČSD executive. Laušman presented Gottwald with a demand to have the building cleared out by the police,

which Gottwald did not want to do, explaining that it was an internal party matter. He agreed in the end, however, and the police removed the leftists [rightists?], returning the building [control over] to the party authorities. The CC Plenum restarted, but the balance had clearly moved to the left. In spite of that, the majority hesitated accepting the proposals of the KSČ. The proposals were aimed at: participation of ČSD as a whole in the new NF government, participation of the ČSD in Action Committees and the expanded NF, granting the ČSD an additional ministry portfolio in the government, and improving collaboration with the KSČ. However, one condition was to be the removal of Majer from the government. In light of the indecisiveness of the majority of the CC, the left departed before the meeting was over, published its political declaration, and delegated Fierlinger to talk directly to Gottwald.

An hour later, most of the CC was persuaded, and had completely isolated the right wing, including Majer and Vilím. Then it was Bernard and Laušman's turn to go to Gottwald to start negotiations on the platform suggested by the KSČ. In such a situation, Gottwald found himself face to face with two different ČSD factions and an actual split.

The PPS delegation spent all of Tuesday trying to influence the CC in order to save the unity of the Social Democratic Party by overthrowing the right and ensuring the acceptance of the KSČ proposals by the rest of the party. It should be noted here that at this stage a small tactical dissonance occurred between the delegation and Fierlinger's left.

Recognizing the situation and appreciating the interests of the socialist movement, the delegation wanted to lead the whole Social Democratic organization, cleared of rightist elements, onto the new political path. Therefore we wanted to keep Laušman as a symbol of party unity and organizational continuity. We realized that to overcome Beneš's obstinacy it was necessary for the Social Democratic Party under Laušman's leadership to follow hand in hand with the KSČ and Gottwald. Laušman's participation was very much needed. At the same time, Fierlinger seemed to perceive the situation somewhat differently and thought that he had gotten an opportunity to take revenge for Brno and Laušman's betrayal. He was counting on taking over the leadership of the party and on the full success of his group. There was a clear conflict between the political interests of the left and ČSD as a whole [on the one hand], and the interests of the individual leaders of the left [on the other]. The PPS delegation placed the overall interests higher, hence the small tactical discrepancy, which did not have any negative results on further collaboration, except for Laušman's momentary reserve. Hearing the news about the ČSD Central Committee majority resolution and the beginning of talks between Laušman and Gottwald, the delegation considered its mission to be over and decided to leave Prague.

Around 10:30 p.m., right before their departure, Com. Rusinek was asked over the telephone by the KSČ leadership if at least part of the delegation could stay for another 24 hours. The initiative came from Com. Gottwald and Slánský [illegible]. It was decided that Com. Rusinek and Arski would stay. The following morning both comrades were invited over, by Com. Gottwald. Even before that, Com. Slansky expressed thanks to the delegation on behalf of the KSČ Central Committee for its help during the crisis and its effective influence over the ČSD leadership.

Com. Gottwald described the situation at that stage of the crisis, the stance of the KSČ and related the course of the night talks with the Fierlinger and Laušman groups. Thanking the PPS delegation for their collaboration, he expressed the wish that the delegation make contact with both groups again and attempt to reconcile them in order to present a unified stance to the outside. Com. Gottwald shared the approach of the PPS delegation, which had tried to influence both ČSD groups in the same spirit. Com. Gottwald also expressed his positive opinion concerning the plan to initiate regular cooperation between the ČSD and the PPS in the future through the creation of a contact commission of both parties. Evaluating the course of the crisis, Com. Gottwald expressed the hope that on Wednesday afternoon President Beneš would sign the resignation [letters] of the former ministers and recognize the new National Front cabinet with eleven Czech and Slovak Communists, four representatives of the Social Democratic [Party], and two representatives from the National Socialist and Slovak Democratic left wings.

Com. Gottwald also expressed the opinion that under the influence of the PPS delegation, Laušman would accept the proposal of the party left to purge the party of rightist elements.

Immediately after this conversation, Com. Rusinek and Arski went to the ČSD Secretariat where they conducted talks with Coms. Němec, Laušman, and Vojta Erban in the spirit of postulates agreed upon with Com. Gottwald.

In the course of the day, the ČSD reorganized its party leadership, removing Majer, Vilím, Bernard, and other rightists, temporarily entrusting Com. Vojta Erban with

the duties of the General Secretary, and announcing a purge of the editorial staff of *Pravo lidu* and the whole organization structure. In his last conversation [with the delegation], Com. Vojta Erban promised to send to the PPS Central Executive Committee the details of the reorganization action in writing and agreed to initiate steady contacts between the ČSD and PPS in the near future.

At that point the delegation ended its activities and returned to Warsaw.

Recapitulating the results of the four-day action:

1. The delegation neutralized the influence of [French Socialist leader] Guy Mollet in the ČSD, who visited Prague a week earlier and tried to dispose the party in the spirit of the "third force;"
2. [The delegation] undermined the mood of the ČSD's extreme right wing;
3. [The delegation] influenced the undecided elements to move to the left;
4. [The delegation] made it easier for the left wing to push the Party on to the correct path;
5. [The delegation] facilitated the reaching of an agreement of the CC majority to start talks with Gottwald's KSČ;
6. [The delegation] contributed to preserving the party as a whole for the NF;
7. [The delegation] influenced the precipitation of the process of removing the rightists [from the party];
8. [The delegation] influenced the resumption of the unified front;
9. [The delegation] tightened collaboration with the ČSD;
10. [The delegation] established close contacts with the KSČ leadership. In the end it proved the correctness of the leftist-socialist propositions in the practical situation of the political crisis, where it was possible to reach a revolutionary solution, under the condition of achieving unified action by the two factions of the worker's movement.

[Source: *Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Warsaw), file 217, packet 16, pp. 1-11. Translated by Anna Elliot-Zielinska.*]

CWIHP is pleased to announce the publication of

Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963,

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Stalin As Editor: The Soviet Dictator's Secret Changes to the Polish Constitution of 1952

By Krzysztof Persak

Stalin's post war policy towards Poland and the influence of the Moscow imperial center on Polish developments have not been hitherto satisfactorily explored by scholars. No monographic study on these questions has been written so far, and few documents have been published. The main reason for this is the lack of sources. Polish documents concerning relations between Stalin and Polish Communist authorities after 1944, as well as regarding Stalin's personal influence on the events in Poland, are unfortunately very scarce.¹ For instance, neither official transcripts nor minutes of meetings between Stalin and Polish Communist leaders have been found in Polish archives thus far, and it is most probable that they were never drawn up by the Polish side.² Thus, one of the main sources remain rare handwritten working notes taken by Polish participants of such meetings, most commonly by the leaders of the Polish Workers' Party (after 1948: Polish United Workers' Party [PUWP])—Władysław Gomułka and Bolesław Bierut.³

However, although sources which exemplify Stalin's direct personal influence on the course of events in Poland are rather rare in Polish archives, there does exist a document of a quite extraordinary nature. This is the Russian-language copy of a draft of the Polish constitution containing Stalin's handwritten amendments.⁴

The Communist-dominated government, installed in Poland in July 1944, did not seem very eager to set up a new constitution. In fact, Poland was the last of the European "People's Democracies" to adopt a constitution which followed the pattern of the Soviet ("Stalinist") constitution of 1936.⁵ One month after the first parliamentary elections were held in Poland, in January 1947, a provisional constitution was passed which gave the Sejm (parliament) five years to adopt a "full" constitution. Yet, two more years went by ineffectively before any preparations were started at all, and eventually, in December 1951, the Legislative Sejm was forced to prolong its own tenure for six months in order to finish its work on the constitution.⁶

First preparations to draw up the new constitution were initiated not by the Legislative Sejm but by the leading organs of the ruling Communist party. In June 1949, the Constitutional Commission consisting of leading party ideologists and lawyers was set up by the PUWP CC Secretariat. By September 1950 the Commission produced a preliminary draft which was handed over to the Politburo for further discussion.

Bierut's notes indicate that even this very early

version of the constitution had been cleared with Stalin. In a short Russian-language note from their conversation in November 1950, Bierut put down questions he was going to ask the Soviet leader.⁷ He wrote down an acronym PSR—which probably means: Polish Socialist Republic—as the proposed name of the state. He also asked Stalin: "should we retain the old emblems?" Bierut's questions also referred to issues of a particular political significance: the separation between the Catholic church and the state, the dominant role of the Communist party and whether other political parties might exist, and finally—sovereignty of the state and the alliance with the Soviet Union. An article of the draft constitution which dealt with the latter question was cited in full length in Bierut's note: "PSR is a sovereign state, a member of the family of socialist states which is led by the USSR. The inviolable alliance with the USSR, with the states of people's democracy and with all democratic forces of the world, is a condition of the development, progress and consolidation of the PSR, a condition of preservation of its lasting independence, sovereignty and security against the aggression of imperialist forces."⁸

Unfortunately, Bierut did not record comments made by the Soviet leader. Stalin's answers, however, can be deduced from the changes which were subsequently introduced to the draft constitution. On 16 November 1950—i.e., after Bierut's consultation with Stalin—the Politburo debated the preliminary draft of the constitution.⁹ One of the most important directives which, based on the results of this discussion, were given to the Constitutional Commission by the Politburo was to "emphasize more firmly the issue of sovereignty, in a manner that would raise no doubts" and to "take fully into account Polish national forms and progressive traditions."¹⁰ In accord with these instructions, the articles concerning the alliance with the Soviet Union and the leading role of the Communist party in the state were not included in the constitution.¹¹ The traditional Polish national emblem—the White Eagle—was not altered, and the official name of the state which was eventually adopted was the Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*).¹² It is more than probable that it was Stalin who decided that.

A key role in formulating and writing the constitution was played by the members of the PUWP Politburo, very notably by the First Secretary Bolesław Bierut. After the party's Constitutional Commission fulfilled its task in June 1951 by composing a second version of the draft

constitution, this new version was again revised by the Politburo. Chapters one and two, which defined basic principles of the political and socio-economical system of the state, were rewritten, and changes were made in other parts as well. A draft of the first two chapters of the constitution written with Bierut's hand has been preserved in his papers.¹³ Bierut also wrote the preamble.

In the fall 1951, the final draft was presented to Stalin who made about fifty changes in the preamble and in twenty-two articles of the constitution. Bierut translated Stalin's amendments personally and then wrote them in a Polish-language copy of the draft. Thus Stalin's corrections were officially introduced to the constitution as Bierut's own ones. Only few members of the top leadership knew who their real author was.

Most of Stalin's amendments dealt with the political phraseology of the constitution, or were only minor editorial or even grammatical ones. For instance, in some cases he replaced "people" with "masses" or "working people" with "citizens." Some other changes, however, had more political and symbolic significance. In accordance with his own earlier recommendations that the national traditions and the sovereignty of the state were to be accentuated, Stalin introduced an attribute "national" in several places (e.g. "national culture", "national rebirth of Poland"). He also crossed out the phrase "under the leadership of the USSR" in the preamble, and openly specified the conquerors of Poland in 19th century – Russia included—which Bierut and other Polish authors of the constitution had not dared to do.

In his corrections, Stalin was quite "generous" with granting political freedoms and social rights to people. In article 70 he inserted freedom of the press and the citizens' right to have access to the radio. He also suggested that medical attention should be free. These changes, of course, had no real meaning to people as they had no possibility to exercise their nominal rights. With regard to article 5, which seemed to offer citizens at least minimum protection of their rights, Stalin was more restrictive: he specified that only "reasonable" proposals, complaints and wishes of citizens would be taken into consideration, and only "in accordance with the existing legislation."

Stalin's other important amendments to the constitution concerned principles of the socio-economical structure. In articles 9 and 58 Stalin highlighted the priority given to collective and cooperative farming (in the first case, by simply transforming "modern cultivation" into "collective cultivation"). Another of his changes sounded rather disquieting. Stalin replaced the declaration in article 3, which stated that the Polish People's Republic would abolish social relations which were based on exploitation, with the ominous formulation that the Polish People's Republic would abolish social classes which lived by exploiting workers and peasants. And there was, of course, a major difference between eliminating unwelcome social *relations* and eliminating the social *classes* themselves.

One of the most consequential corrections which had a considerable impact on legislation and jurisprudence in the domain of civil law was more a result of Bierut's mistranslation than Stalin's deliberate intention. In article 11 of the draft, which referred to the protection of private property of the means of production belonging to craftsmen and peasants, Stalin changed the expression "private property" (*chastnaia sobstvennost'*) into "personal property" (*lichnaia sobstvennost'*) despite the fact that even the constitutions of the USSR and other People's Democracies sanctioned the existence of this kind of private property. In this manner the same qualifier (i.e. "personal") was used in article 11 as in the following article which concerned the property of consumer goods. Bierut, however, while translating Stalin's corrections used a synonym "individual property," and by doing so unwittingly introduced to the constitution a new, previously unknown type of property. What is interesting, is that this change turned out to be quite troublesome for Polish lawyers who were forced to work out whole new theories in order to justify and explain the meaning of "individual" property which was a novelty even to Marxist jurisprudence.¹⁴ The amendment concerning private property was perhaps one of the most long-lasting consequences of Stalin's decisions on Polish affairs too: only recently, in 1997, the notion of private property was reintroduced to the constitution of Poland.

Before it was finally passed by the Polish Sejm on 22 July 1952, the constitution underwent some further modifications as a result of the parliamentary debate and the subsequent nationwide discussion. Most of these changes, however, were rather superficial, and did not affect the alterations that had been introduced by Stalin. His corrections were unquestionable and unalterable even if some of them—like the one concerning the elimination of undesirable social classes—raised doubts among high-ranking Polish officials.¹⁵ Although Stalin's amendments were in fact not fundamental nor did they have any direct impact on political developments in Poland, the mere fact of his correcting the Polish constitution is of exceptional significance due to its symbolic dimension. It was a manifest example of Poland's lack of sovereignty and subjugation to the Soviet Union.

The fact that Stalin corrected the Polish constitution was unknown to the public until the mid-eighties. It was revealed the first time by former Politburo member Jakub Berman in his interview with Teresa Toranska but Berman's account was on this point imprecise and not entirely reliable.¹⁶ The most crucial of Stalin's corrections were published in Polish by Andrzej Garlicki in 1990, after the archives of the Communist Party became accessible.¹⁷ This version was based on the Polish text of Stalin's amendments which slightly differed from the Russian one and included some of Bierut's own corrections too. The present version is based on the Russian-language copy of the draft of the constitution which was actually read by Stalin. It includes the full text

of the preamble and those sections of the constitution in which Stalin introduced his amendments. Seven articles of the constitution in which the amendments were so minor that in translation into English they would be negligible were omitted. Words deleted by Stalin are printed with strikethrough font and words added by Stalin in bold font.

Draft

Constitution of the Polish People's Republic

The Polish People's Republic **is a republic of the working people, carries on carrying on** the most glorious progressive traditions of the Polish Nation and **gives giving** effect to the liberation ideals of the Polish working **people masses**. The Polish working people, under the leadership of its heroic working class, and on the basis of the alliance between workers and peasants, fought for many years against the national enslavement **and oppression imposed by the Prussian, Austrian and Russian conquerors and colonizers as well as, just as** against exploitation by the **Polish** capitalists and landlords. During the occupation the Polish Nation waged an unflinching fight against the bloody Hitlerite captivity. The historic victory **of the USSR** over fascism, by liberating Polish soil, enabled the Polish working people to take power, and created conditions for the **national** re-birth of Poland within new and just frontiers. The Recovered Territories¹⁸ were restored to Poland forever.

By carrying out the memorable directives of the Manifesto of 22 July 1944,¹⁹ and by developing the principles laid down in the program of that Manifesto, the People's Authority—thanks to the selfless and creative efforts of the Polish working people in the fight against the bitter resistance of the remnants of the old capitalist-landlord system—has accomplished great social changes. As a result of revolutionary transformations the rule of the capitalists and landlords has been overthrown, a State of People's Democracy has been firmly established, and a new social system, in accord with the interests and aspirations of the great majority of the people, is taking shape and growing in strength.

The legal principles of this system are laid down by the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic.

The basis of the People's Authority **in Poland today** is the alliance between the working class and the working peasants. In this alliance, the leading role belongs to the working class – **as the most revolutionary class of the Polish society** – the class based on the revolutionary gains of the Polish and international working class movement, and on the historic experience of victorious socialist constructing in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, the first State of workers and peasants.

Implementing the will of the Polish Nation, the Legislative Sejm²⁰ of the Republic of Poland,²¹ in accordance with its purpose, solemnly adopts the present

Constitution as the fundamental law by which the Polish Nation and all organs of authority of the Polish working people shall be guided, in order:

To consolidate the People's State as the fundamental power assuring to the Polish Nation the highest degree of prosperity, its independence and sovereignty.

To accelerate the further political, economic and cultural development of Poland, and **further** growth of its resources.

To strengthen the unity and solidarity of the Polish Nation in its struggle still further to ~~transform~~ **improve** social conditions, to eliminate completely the exploitation of man by man, and to put into effect the great ideals of socialism.

To strengthen friendship and cooperation between nations, on the basis of the principles of alliance and brotherhood which today link the Polish Nation with the **peace-loving** nations of the ~~peace-camp~~ **world** in their common effort ~~under the leadership of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics~~ to make aggression impossible and to consolidate world peace.

Article 3

The Polish People's Republic:

[...]

d) places restrictions on, gradually ejects and abolishes ~~social relations which are based on exploitation~~ **those classes of society which live by exploiting the workers and peasants**.

e) ensures a continual rise in the level of the prosperity and secures the development of **national** culture and of education ~~of the working people of town and country of the people~~.

Article 4

1. The laws of the Polish People's Republic express the will of the working people ~~and are a common good of the Polish Nation~~.

Article 5

All organs of State power and administration are supported in the exercise of their functions by the conscious and active cooperation of the broadest masses of the people, and they are bound:

a) to account **to the Nation** for their work;

b) to **examine carefully and** take into consideration, **in accordance with the existing legislation, reasonable** proposals, complaints and wishes of the citizens

Article 8

1. The Polish People's Republic develops, according to plan, the economic bond between town and country **founded on the brotherly cooperation between workers and peasants**.

Article 9

[...]

2. The Polish People's Republic gives special support and all-round aid to the cooperative farms set up, on the basis of voluntary membership, as forms of collective economy. By applying methods of the highly efficient **modern collective** cultivation and mechanized work, collective farming enables the working peasants to reach a turning point in **the rise of** production and contributes to the complete elimination of **backwardness exploitation** in the countryside and to a rapid and considerable improvement in the level of its prosperity and culture.

3. The principal form of State support and help for cooperative farms are the State machine stations, which make it possible to employ modern technology; **and State credits on easy terms.**

Article 11

1. The Polish People's Republic recognizes and protects **private individual**²² property and the right to inherit land, buildings and **all other** means of production belonging to peasants, craftsmen and persons engaged in domestic handicrafts.

2. This protection, as well as the right of inheritance, is guaranteed, **within the limits on the basis of** existing laws, **also to other spheres of private property.**

Article 12

The Polish People's Republic guarantees to citizens full protection of personal property and the right to inherit such property.

Article 13

[...]

2. By their work, by the observance of work discipline, by work emulation and the perfecting of methods of work, the working people of town and country add to the strength and power of the Polish People's Republic, raise the level of prosperity of the people and expedite the full realization of the **socialist** system of **social justice.**

[...]

Article 58

[...]

2. The right to work is ensured by the social ownership of the basic means of production, by the development of **a social and cooperative system in the countryside social relations**, free from exploitation; by the planned growth of the productive forces; by the elimination of sources of **economic** crises and by the abolition of unemployment.

[...]

Article 60

1. Citizens of the Polish People's Republic have the right to health protection and to aid in the event of sickness or incapacity for work.

2. Effect is being given to this right on an increasing

scale through:

[...]

b) the development of State organized protection of the health of the population, the expansion of sanitation services and the raising of the health standards in town and country, a wide campaign for the prevention of and fighting disease, increasing access to **free**²³ medical attention, the development of hospitals, sanatoria, medical aid centers, rural health centers, and care for the disabled.

Article 68

1. Citizens of the Polish People's Republic, irrespective of nationality, race or religion, enjoy equal rights in all spheres of **public**, political, economic, social and cultural life. Infringement of this principle by any direct or indirect granting of privileges or restriction of rights, on account of nationality, race or religion, is punishable **by law.**

2. The spreading of **national** hatred or contempt, the provocation of strife or the humiliation of man on account of national, racial or religious differences are forbidden **and punishable.**

Article 69

1. Polish People's Republic guarantees freedom of conscience and religion to citizens. The Church and other religious unions **are free may freely exercise their religious functions.** It is forbidden to **prevent anybody from taking** **coerce citizens not to take** part in religious activities or rites. It is also forbidden to coerce anybody to participate in religious activities or rites.

2. The Church is separated from the State. The principles of the relationship between Church and State are, together with the legal and patrimonial position of religious bodies, determined by law.

3. The abuse of the freedom of conscience and religion for purposes prejudicial to the interests of the Polish People's Republic is **forbidden punishable by law.**

Article 70

1. The Polish People's Republic guarantees its citizens freedom of speech, **of the press**, of public meetings, of processions and demonstrations.

2. Making available to the working people and their organizations the use of printing shops, stocks of paper, public buildings and halls, means of communication, **the radio** and other indispensable material means, serves to give effect to this freedom.

Article 81

Every ~~adult~~ citizen **who has reached the age of eighteen**²⁴ has, irrespective of sex, nationality and race, religion, education, length of residence, social origin, profession or property, the right to vote.

Article 82

Every **one citizen** who has the right to vote is eligible for the election to the People's Councils²⁵, and to the Sejm – after having reached the age of twenty-one.

Article 86

Candidates are nominated by political and social organizations, uniting **working people citizens** of town and country.

[Source: AAN (Archive of Modern Records), KC PZPR, 2774, pp. 1-27. Obtained and translated by Krzysztof Persak.]

Krzysztof Persak is a doctoral student and Junior Fellow at the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences. In the Spring of 1999, he will spend several months on research in the U.S. as a CWIHP Fellow.

¹ Fortunately, Russian sources have started emerging in recent years. Among the most important documentary collections on Polish-Soviet relations in the Stalin years are: *Polska - ZSRR: struktury podleglosci. Dokumenty KC WKP(b) 1944-1949* [Poland-USSR: The Structures of Subjection. Documents of VKP(b), 1944-1949], edited by Giennadii A. Bordiugov, Aleksander Kochanski, Adam Koseski, Giennadii F. Matveev and Andrzej Paczkowski (Warsaw: Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, 1995. A Russian edition of this volume, published in Moscow, exists as well); *NKVD i polskoe podpol'e 1944-1945 (Po "osobiim papkam" I. V. Stalina)*, ed. A. F. Noskova et al. (Moscow: Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1994); *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov 1944-1953 gg.*, Vol. 1: 1944-1948, ed. G. P. Murashko et al. (Moscow-Novosibirsk: Sibirskii Khronograf, 1997).

² The first known official transcript of Polish-Soviet talks of the post-war period, prepared by the Polish side, is one of Gomulka's visit to Moscow in November 1956. A selection of Polish documents on Polish-Soviet relations in the years 1956-1970 which includes minutes of Gomulka's meetings with Khrushchev and Brezhnev has been just published: *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego: PRL-ZSRR, 1956-1970*, ed. Andrzej Paczkowski, (London: Aneks Publishers, 1998).

³ So far, I have been able to locate 17 sets of such published and unpublished notes, 13 of them are Bierut's notes. The

remainder were taken by Gomulka, Jakub Berman and Edward Osobka-Morawski. The results of my survey were presented in the paper "Polish Sources on Stalin's Foreign Policy" at the CWIHP workshop "European Archival Evidence on Stalin and the Cold War" in Budapest on 3-4 October 1997. The Hungarian language version of this paper is scheduled for publication in the yearbook of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

⁴ See: AAN [Archive of Modern Records], KC PZPR, 2774, pp. 1-27.

⁵ The two first countries of the Soviet bloc to adopt new "socialist" constitutions were Yugoslavia (31 January 1946) and Albania (14 March 1946). They were followed by the constitutions of Bulgaria (4 December 1947), Romania (13 April 1948), Czechoslovakia (9 May 1948), Hungary (20 August 1949), GDR (7 October 1949), another constitution by Albania (4 July 1950), and finally of Poland (22 July 1952). Shortly afterwards the new constitution of Romania was passed (27 September 1952).

⁶ The course of the 1949-1952 constitutional works was most fully analyzed by Marian Rybicki, "Geneza i tryb przygotowania Konstytucji PRL z 1952 r.", in: *Konstytucje Polski*, Vol. 2, ed. Marian Kallas, (Warsaw: PWN, 1990).

⁷ AAN, KC PZPR, 2609, p. 288. The note is not dated but from Bierut's other notes it can be inferred that this conversation took place on 3 November 1950.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁹ AAN, KC PZPR, 1636, p. 14. "Protokol nr 44 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 16 listopada 1950 r".

¹⁰ Rybicki, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

¹¹ The questions of friendship with the USSR and PUWP's leading role in society would be introduced to the Polish constitution in 1976. This would become one of the impulses for the rise of democratic opposition in Poland.

¹² In Polish both *republika* and *rzeczpospolita* mean "republic" but only the Old Polish word *rzeczpospolita* is traditionally reserved to be used with regard to the name of the Polish state. Thus although in 1952 the Polish Republic became "People's", it still remained *rzeczpospolita*, not *republika*.

¹³ AAN, KC PZPR, 2772, pp. 82-90.

¹⁴ These explanations were usually very unconvincing. For example, an eminent Polish lawyer, Jan Wasilkowski, in conclusion of an article in which he discussed the new legislation on property contradicted all his previous argumentation and wrote that avoiding the term "private property" in the constitution was only a matter of style and the essence of "individual" and "private" property of means of production remained the same. (See Jan Wasilkowski, "Typy i formy własności w projekcie konstytucji Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej," *Panstwo i Prawo*, 3, 1952, p. 436-437).

¹⁵ See: AAN, KC PZPR, 2737, p. 151, "Zestawienie treści istotniejszych poprawek zgłoszonych do Projektu Konstytucji Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej."

¹⁶ Teresa Toranska, *Oni* (London: Aneks Publishers, 1985), pp. 314-315. For the English edition see: Toranska, *Oni: Stalin's Polish Puppets*, trans. by Agnieszka Kolakowska (London: Collins, Harvill, 1987).

¹⁷ Andrzej Garlicki, "Zatwierdzenie Konstytucji PRL", *Polityka* 28 (1990). Reprinted in Garlicki's book: *Z tajnych archiwów* (Warsaw: BGW, 1993), pp. 187-194.

¹⁸ The provinces of Lower Silesia, Pomerania and a part of East Prussia, in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement, were handed over to Poland, concurrently with the Russian acquisition



of Eastern Poland.

¹⁹ The Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation was treated as the founding deed of the new communist authority in Poland, and the day of its proclamation, July 22, was celebrated as the national holiday until 1989.

²⁰ *Sejm* is the proper name of Polish Parliament. The Legislative Sejm was elected in January 1947, and its main purpose was to establish the new constitution of People's Poland.

²¹ Until the adoption of this constitution, the official name of the state was the Republic of Poland (*Rzeczpospolita Polska*).

²² Originally, in the Russian copy of the draft, Stalin replaced the word "private" with "personal" but Bierut translated it as "individual".

²³ This amendment was not introduced by Stalin directly into the text of the constitution. He wrote a suggestion "Healthcare free?" on the margin of the draft, and the word "free" was added to the text of the constitution by Bierut when he re-wrote Stalin's corrections.

²⁴ Like in article 60, this correction probably was not introduced directly by Stalin. He underlined the word "adult" and wrote the question "How many years?" above it. The words "who has reached the age of eighteen" were written in Russian, most probably with Bierut's hand.

²⁵ People's Councils were organs of local government (equivalent to *Soviets* in the Soviet Union).

THE COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL HISTORY PROJECT

WORKSHOP

"Recasting the International History of the Vietnam War"

26 March 1998

9:15-9:30 *Welcome and Introductions*

Christian F. Ostermann (CWIHP)

Mark Bradley (University of Chicago)

9:30-12:00 Session I *"New Perspectives on the Vietnam War from Russian, Chinese, Indian and Eastern European Archives"*

Chair: David Wolff (CWIHP)

Chen Jian (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale), "New Evidence from the Chinese Archives on the Vietnam War"

Qiang Zhai (Auburn University, Montgomery), "Local Chinese Sources on the Vietnam War"

Mari Olsen (Norwegian Institute for Defense Studies, Oslo), "New Russian Evidence on Vietnam"

Leszek Gluchowski (Toronto), "New Evidence from the Polish Archives on the Vietnam War"

Francine Frankel (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), "Indian Archival Materials"

Comments: Ralph Smith (University of London) and Robert Boswell (Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars)

Discussion

1:30-4:30 Session II *"New Vietnamese Evidence on the War" (Roundtable)*

Chair: Mark Bradley (University of Chicago)

Oscar Salemink (Ford Foundation/Vietnam Program)

Ralph Smith (University of London)

Judy Stowe (London)

Jim Hershberg (George Washington University)

Comment: Chen Jian

Discussion

-For further information on the workshop, contact CWIHP at COLDWAR1@WWIC.SI.EDU-