

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President of Poland Lech Walesa
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: American:

The President
Ambassador Madeleine Albright, Permanent
Representative of the United States to the
United Nations
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Daniel Fried, Senior Director for Central and
Eastern Europe, NSC (Notetaker)

Polish

President Lech Walesa
Jerzy Kozminski, Ambassador of the Republic
of Poland to the United States
Mieczyslaw Wachowski, Presidential Chief of
Staff
Robert Mroziewicz, Deputy Foreign Minister
Leszek Spalinski, Presidential Spokesman
Andrzej Zakrzewski, Secretary of State for
Political Affairs in the Presidential
Office

DATE, TIME June 26, 1995, 12:20-12:55 p.m.
AND PLACE: Foyer, Herbst Theater, War Memorial Veterans
Building, San Francisco

The President: When did you arrive in San Francisco? (U)

President Walesa: We arrived yesterday, and I had talks with
Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. I expressed my gratitude to him
for all the U.N. has accomplished but also noted Poland's
apprehension about the future of the U.N. It needs to become
less bureaucratic if it is to have a future. It needs to define
its obligations and duties more clearly; if it can do this, it
can have real successes. It is hard to see hope for the world
without the U.N., but it must increase its efficiency. We cannot

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have Yugoslavias in other areas; the international community cannot afford to show disregard for people. But if we define the conditions for U.N. action, we can avoid such trouble in the future. Above all, the U.N. must define the conditions under which it will act and the principles that it will defend at any cost. (G)

The President: It's good to see you again. Let me start by saying how pleased we are by Poland's participation in the Partnership for Peace. I've asked Congress for funds to support the Partnership this year. I believe support in NATO is building for making the Partnership meaningful and for eventually expanding NATO itself. There are two principal elements in the question of NATO's expansion. The first is a country's participation in the Partnership for Peace. The second has to do with demonstrated civilian control over a non-political military. We look forward to moving ahead because, as you know, the United States supports Poland's integration with all the institutions of the West. (G)

President Walesa: The Partnership for Peace is a good idea, but there are problems. Moscow may have joined the Partnership, but it has a long way toward really participating fully in it. Moscow signed the Partnership for Peace documents with one hand, but its other hand is doing something else. (G)

The press recently cited a Russian general saying that if Poland were to join NATO, Russia's missiles now stationed in Kaliningrad would turn to point toward Poland. My answer to him would be that Polish scientists are capable of making Russian missiles launched against Poland hit him in the ear. The real problem is with Russia's way of thinking about the world and about Europe. The United States and President Clinton have a great historic responsibility. You have my sympathies. I would not like to be in your shoes. (G)

Still, Poland has experience in its part of the world. I'm convinced that you have just a few historical minutes left to take decisive steps. You must expand NATO in spite of Russia. Don't fear their missiles. Russia today can't pose a threat. But tomorrow it could. So you must move decisively and not wait until it is too late. NATO must make a manly decision (meska decysja). The European Union is important, maybe even more so than NATO, but it is so complicated with its economic rules that joining it will take time -- years. And we don't have years. NATO needs to make a manly decision sooner. (G)

The President: I know that some of the things the Russians say trouble you. I've been in contact with the Russians myself. I was in Moscow for the May Commemoration of the end of the Second

World War, and I made two points to Yeltsin and to the Duma Deputies with whom I met: first, I said that NATO always was a defensive alliance, not offensive; second, I said that although the Cold War was over and no USSR existed, NATO was the only organization that bound the United States to European security in the post-Cold War world. (C)

The United States is committed to NATO's expansion according to a deliberate timetable. We will not permit Russia nor anyone else to change this. Expansion will come in time; it will not be put off for years and years. (C)

Now that NATO Ministers have made a decision and adopted a timetable on NATO expansion for this year, we should stick to it. Speeding it up would worry and irritate Russia; slowing it down would worry Poland and others. I assure you that we will stay on the steady path. Everything I have ever said to you to about NATO enlargement remains true. The United States will adhere strictly to what NATO has agreed. (C)

Let me thank you for Poland's help to the United States in Iraq on behalf of the two Americans imprisoned there. They are not yet freed, but Poland has helped them anyway and we are grateful. (C).

President Walesa: Poland has always been very loyal to its Allies and to the United States on all occasions. We understand the internal limitations of the United States. We know we cannot rely solely on the United States. We must do more ourselves. But the presence of the United States in Europe, especially in the current transition period, is crucial, otherwise Europe will be lost. (C)

The President: I agree. (U).

President Walesa: NATO's expansion is crucial and the United States needs to provide the impetus for it. I've spoken to all the members of NATO and I know that all countries in it are equal. But the dollar and the Deutchmark have great voices; the United States and Germany have just a little more weight than the other members. It is important to make this process go forward. We don't need to create a danger zone in Europe. (C)

I don't want to be confrontational, but we know Russia. A democratic, reforming Russia with a market economy can be a good partner for Poland and for us all. But do not tempt Russia through uncertainty. First, lock Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic outside of Russia's sphere of influence and then Russia will turn inward. Russia's threatening noises do not bother us. We need only a manly decision: if you make it, nothing (bad)

will happen. But if you do not, Russia's demands will only increase. In that case, the United States would have to remain in Europe forever at great cost. (C)

Poland in NATO could lift America's NATO burden. We don't need a massive, military American presence, just leadership. But without NATO expansion there is a great risk. Today, Russia cannot threaten us; its rockets don't work. But tomorrow? I fear postponing decisions. This is your responsibility, Mr. President. (C)

The President: We won't postpone decisions, and we will proceed. We won't wait beyond the danger point. (C)

President Walesa: The decision on expanding NATO will have a tremendous impact on Poland. People will be euphoric; their dream of centuries will have come true. The costs today are low for securing peace in Europe for a long time. A decision could correct the mistakes of Yalta and Potsdam. You have a historic chance, Mr. President. It could be written of you that you solved that mess in Europe once and for all. If I were you, I'd make that historic decision. We don't need confrontational camps. Once the decision is made, peace and stability will follow. So will good business. Those business generals like General Motors and General Electric will follow the NATO generals. (C)

We don't want a divided Europe. Poland has done its best to help Ukraine. Of course, we tried to help Belarus, too, but we've lost Belarus for now. Still, if we helped Ukraine, Ukraine could help Belarus. You see, we have no common border with Russia, Kaliningrad aside, though Russian troops now patrol the Polish-Belarus frontier. It is too bad about Belarus. (C)

The President: I know. I was in Belarus and was disappointed in it. We won't turn away, but Belarus feels incapable of a separate economic existence. (C)

President Walesa: But Belarus would have had more of a chance if we had helped with economic support. We could help make the country independent of Russian fuel supplies. If Poland were hooked up to the West's energy network, we would help Belarus a lot and this would make a difference politically. But Russia has all its fingers on the taps. Somehow we must break this hold. Poland is developing very well, but we are still too weak; we lack the potential. We cannot help Belarus on our own. But if we cooperated with the United States, we could. We know the Eastern markets very well. (C)

The President:

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I appreciated your statement condemning anti-Semitism following Father Jankowski's unfortunate remarks. These primitive emotions are on the rise everywhere, including in the United States. We have more of this than we used to, and it is hard to beat it back. Perhaps one way to ease tensions concerning this question would be to help resolve the issue of Jewish communal property. I know this is a governmental and not a Presidential issue, and I know that individual restitution claims are more difficult to resolve, but it would be very well received if Poland could make progress on this issue. (C)

President Walesa: On the question of arms trade, we don't want to engage in it at all. But how will our arms plants find new production? How can we reorient our production? This is hard to do. The old communist politicians gave orders and so we have too much of this sort of capacity. But what are we to do? People want their pay and look to me to give them the possibility of work. Workers are making tanks with barrels pointed at the sky, but angry workers could lower the barrels at me if I don't watch out. Besides, other countries like Slovakia are capturing markets that we give up. So we need help. If our tank plants made bananas, we'd have plenty of customers. But they don't. We need to learn to make new things, but this costs money we don't have. So help us reconstruct our arms plants. (C)

On Father Jankowski, my views as President on anti-Semitism are well known. I've done a lot for Polish-Jewish and Polish-Israeli relations. As long as I am President, I won't allow anti-Semitism in Poland. But I cannot speak to each individual Priest or Rabbi. And I cannot speak at all to someone like Rabbi Weiss. The Polish Church, the Episcopate, reacted immediately to what Father Jankowski said, so I didn't see the need. Besides, if I made a public statement every time someone said something stupid about Jews, some people would make such statements all the time just to show me. (U)

I'm good friends with (Israeli Knesset Speaker Shewah) Weiss and Elie Wiesel. I've spoken to them about this. Maybe I didn't do enough this time. But it (Jankowski's anti-Semitic sermon) happened at Sunday Mass. The Mass was long and boring. I wasn't paying attention; nobody was. I would have gotten up and walked out if I had heard what Jankowski was supposed to have said. But I didn't. What I heard was ambiguous and could be badly interpreted if you wanted to. The trouble was that Jankowski clarified his remarks on the radio a couple of days later and

this made it worse. But he didn't say these things (on the radio) in my presence. I thought that because he was a Priest, it was enough that the Church criticized him. Anyway, I won't allow anti-Semitism in Poland. I'll do all I can to constrain it, and I'll work with my friends Weiss and Wiesel. I am a friend of the Jews. (U)

Regarding reprivatization, there is legislation now before the Parliament to deal with this question. But it is tough. Poland is poor. How are we to resolve this problem? It would be good if the Jews returned to Poland. They could come back and invest in businesses and the country would be better off. But they have their own country now. So they won't come back. Anyway, giving back property isn't as easy as it looks. The Russians confiscated Jewish property in Warsaw and on it they built the gigantic Palace of Culture. So what are we supposed to do? If Jews want their land back, what do we do with the building? We don't want it. Neither do they. But it's there. Maybe the Americans will buy it. We should find a way to compensate owners, but within our means. (C)

The President: It was good to talk to you. (U)

President Walesa: Thank you. (U)

-- End of Conversation --