

April 28, 1944

**Record of a Conversation between I. V. Stalin and
the Roman Catholic Priest Stanislaus Orlemanski
about the Feelings of the Polish Nationals in the
United States toward the USSR**

Citation:

"Record of a Conversation between I. V. Stalin and the Roman Catholic Priest Stanislaus Orlemanski about the Feelings of the Polish Nationals in the United States toward the USSR", April 28, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Vostochnaia Evropa, vol. 1, edited by G.P. Murashko, et al, pp. 36-42 (AVPRF, f. 6, op. 6, p. 42, d. 548, l. 9-15). Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/123130>

Summary:

Stalin and Stanislaus Orlemanski, an American priest of Polish-American heritage, discuss America's perception of the Soviet Union, and the relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Record of a Conversation between I. V. Stalin
and the Roman Catholic Priest St. Orlemanski
about the Feelings of the Polish Nationals in the United States
toward the USSR

Moscow April 28, 1944
22 hours 00 minutes
SECRET

Comrade V. M. Molotov was present.

Greeting Comrade Stalin, Orlemanski says that first of all he would like to pass a small gift from his sister to Comrade Stalin. He opens his briefcase, takes out two book weights shaped as American eagles, and gives them to Comrade Stalin.

Comrade Stalin thanks him and notes that the eagles do not look like eagles. They do not look like the Polish eagles. They look rather like doves.

Orlemanski says that these are real American eagles.

Orlemanski states that he would like to tell Comrade Stalin about the situation with the Polish nationals in the United States of America. He will give Comrade Stalin the real picture. At the present time, the situation is rather difficult. Polish organizations and clergy are inclined against the Soviet Union. The goal of Orlemanski's visit to the Soviet Union is to find out how to split them. He was working on this issue successfully in America. He was in Canada where he spoke to the representatives of all the Polish circles. They supported his actions. There are many Poles in America. For example, there are 330 thousand Polish nationals in Detroit. After he returns from Moscow, he could go there, make a speech and win them to his side. The Poles in America represent a major force; there are about 5 million Poles in America. There are half a million Polish nationals in Chicago alone. The Poles play a significant role in the election of the President of the United States. Therefore, Roosevelt has to be very careful in terms of open speeches on the Polish issue. He, Orlemanski, would like to win the American Poles to his side and to prepare the ground for Roosevelt's open speeches on the Polish issue. The Poles in America often discuss the rumors that the Polish children and adult Polish nationals who live in the Soviet Union are treated badly. He, Orlemanski, came here and he has already seen the Polish children and the adults. He thinks that the Polish people should be thankful to Russia and to Stalin for everything that Russia has already given and is now giving to the Poles.

Comrade Stalin says that we are not cannibals.

Orlemanski laughs and says that he saw everything he wanted to see. He had a conversation with Molotov, [\[1\]](#) and he is satisfied with everything that Molotov told him. He agrees with Molotov. But the strongest argument that the Polish Catholics in America have against the Soviet Union is that Russia allegedly is planning to destroy the Catholic church in Poland. He, Orlemanski, knows that this is not correct and when he returns to the United States he will inform the Poles correctly about the true state of affairs. If he, Orlemanski, wins the Polish priests in America over to his side, it would be a big help for us because it will affect the mood of the Polish clergy in Poland proper, and they will cooperate with the Soviet people when the latter enter Poland. He wants to know how to do that. He thinks that he can do it, even though it is quite a difficult task.

Comrade Stalin responds that there are all kinds of stories about the Soviet people. They say that they want to destroy the religion. These rumors originate from the fact

that during the initial period of the existence of the Soviet government we experienced a cruel struggle between the representatives of the Orthodox church and the representatives of the Soviet government in Russia. When the new government, which was led by Lenin, emerged in Russia after the revolution in October 1917, the leaders of the Orthodox church and of other religious groups declared that the Soviet government was anathema, and called for the population to disobey its orders.

Orlemanski mentions that separation of church from the government is a very good thing.

Comrade Stalin continues to say that we, Bolsheviks, have a point in our program that guarantees the freedom of religious expression. From the first days of the existence of the Soviet state, we set ourselves a goal to implement that point in our life. But the rebellious actions of the activists of the Orthodox church eliminated the possibility to implement that point in real life, and the government was forced to accept the confrontation after the church condemned the Soviet government. The misunderstandings and problems between the representatives of the religion and of the Soviet government emerged precisely on these grounds. This was before the war with the Germans. After the beginning of the war with the Germans, people and things have changed. The war eliminated the contradictions between the church and the state. The believers abandoned their positions of rebellion, and the Soviet government abandoned its own militant position toward the religion.

Orlemanski notes that he completely understands it.

Comrade Stalin says that as far as Poland is concerned, the Soviet government has no intentions to interfere in its internal affairs, let alone interfere in religious affairs. The kind of political, social or religious order that will exist in Poland is the business of the Poles themselves. What would we, the Soviet people, like to have in Poland? We would like Poland to have a government that would understand and value good relations with its Eastern neighbor and that would be willing to preserve these relations in the interests of the struggle with our common enemy, Germany, which regardless of how we defeat it, will renew itself again. This is our main goal.

It is interesting to point out that the first German attack on France happened in 1870. Germany won the war because during that time there were many neutral countries. Germany attacked France for the second time in 1914. Germany lost the First World War because many states did not stay on the positions on neutrality to the end of the war, and because they turned against Germany. Therefore, the breaks between the acts of German aggression were becoming shorter and shorter. The first period lasted for 40 - 42 years, second period lasted for 21 years, counting from 1918 to 1939. He, Comrade Stalin, thinks that Germany will be able to renew itself in some 15 years. That is why we must think not only about how to end this war, which we will most probably end with a victory, but also about what would happen in 20 years, when Germany revives itself. This is why an alliance between Russia and Poland is absolutely necessary in order not to let the Germans become an aggressor once again. During the last 140 - 150 years, since the time of Napoleon, Russia was invaded three times. Napoleon's invasion was the first one. During the last World War the Germans invaded Russia, and, finally, they did it once again. All these invasions happened through Poland, which was turned into some kind of a corridor for foreign invaders. Regardless of whether the aggressors were defeated or successful, the Poles had to suffer. He, Comrade Stalin, thinks that the Poles are tired of serving as a corridor, and the Russians are tired of the fact that troops of aggressors come to Russia through Poland. Therefore, he, Comrade Stalin, thinks that if Poland and Russia have an alliance, only the Poles and the Russians would be the winners and the German aggressors would be the losers. He, Comrade Stalin, could give Orlemanski the example of Grunwald battle, during which the Slavic peoples united against the members of the German order of Knights of the Sword. The united Poles, Russians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians then defeated the Germans. He,

Comrade Stalin, thinks that we should revive the policy of Grunwald on a broad basis. This is his dream. He, Comrade Stalin, would like to know what doubts Orlemanski has regarding the Soviet government's position on the Polish issue. He, Comrade Stalin, could give him explanations on this issue.

Orlemanski responds that he personally has no doubts.

Comrade Stalin says that the question of borders between Poland and the Soviet Union and between Poland and Germany creates some doubts. He, Comrade Stalin, thinks that an alliance between Russia and Poland, Poland and Ukraine, and Poland and Byelorussia will work only under the condition that none of the countries mentioned above will take over lands of another country. It seems to Comrade Stalin that after these countries abandoned their claims toward each other, they would be able to improve friendship between them. This is what the Soviet government had in mind when it proposed the Curzon line. He, Comrade Stalin, has to say that the Curzon line was initially proposed against the will of the Soviet government, and without its agreement. This line was developed during the Paris Peace Conference. The work on it began in 1918 and was completed in 1919 when it was announced. The Polish delegation in Versailles did not agree with this line; neither did the Soviet government. It would be impossible to rein in the German aggressor in the future without a serious, large, and independent Poland. It is important that Poland is not isolated, but rather has connections with Russia and with the Western allies. As far as the Western borders of Poland are concerned, first of all we need to talk about it with the Polish representatives. Roosevelt and Churchill asked Stalin in Teheran about the Western borders of Poland. He, Comrade Stalin, together with Molotov, said that in their opinion the Western border of Poland should go along Oder and even to the west of Oder. It would be advisable to include Stettin in the Polish territory, it is a good port, and maybe Breslau. Roosevelt was asking how they could achieve that. He, Comrade Stalin, responded that they would have to defeat Germany, and then they would help Poland do it. That was our position. What he, Comrade Stalin, just presented is not simply our platonic desire. We will be fighting for Poland to get those territories.

Orlemanski expresses his approval of what Comrade Stalin has just said, and adds that they would truly need to fight for it. If there is friendship between Russia and Poland, then the Germans would not be moving eastward. They would be moving to the West.

Comrade Stalin notes, that we would not let the Germans move to the West either, because Russia and Poland would be also allied with the Western countries - Britain and France.

Orlemanski says that if we want to achieve that, then we should not let the Polish nobility and rich people who abandoned Poland and who live now in luxurious mansions in London and New York return to Poland. If they come back to Poland, they will turn everything there upside down. They will incite the Polish people to hostile actions against the Soviet Union. The trouble is that Poland always had bad leaders. They always live in the past, looking back to their traditions.

Comrade Stalin responds that the Polish people is a good people. The Poles are courageous soldiers. Regarding the Polish aristocrats and the rich people whom Orlemanski has just mentioned, it seems to him, Comrade Stalin, that the Polish peasants, workers and the intelligentsia would not let them return to the country. The Polish peasants, workers and the intelligentsia had to suffer too much during the entire German occupation. It is just a miracle how they survived all the nightmares of their existence, after all that they have lived through. Of course, they will not let these people back who brought all the present suffering to Poland. Such are the feelings of the Polish people as far as he, Comrade Stalin, knows about them.

Orlemanski says that he is full of willingness to work in order to split the Polish emigre clique. He was very happy to meet with Stalin. Once he returns to America, he will get to work and he will inform Stalin about everything. However, as he has already said to Molotov, he would like his visit here not to be widely publicized.

Comrade Molotov mentions that the American press is already writing about Orlemanski's visit to Moscow. For example, The New York Herald Tribune.

Orlemanski states that he would like his trip to Moscow be publicized only after his work achieves certain results, after he gets back to America. At that time it would be appropriate to publish his picture with Stalin. He, Orlemanski, would like to know if he could count on being photographed together with Stalin.

Comrade Stalin responds positively and calls the photographer. He asks Orlemanski if he would agree to a statement being published tomorrow in our newspapers about today's reception.

Orlemanski states that now, because the American press is writing about his trip to the Soviet Union, we could published the proposed statement.

Comrade Molotov drafts a statement, and Orlemanski agrees with the text of the draft.

Orlemanski asks whether Comrade Stalin views it as more desirable that he, Orlemanski, not visit the Polish Anny in the Soviet Union, but instead leave and return to the United States in order to take part in the Polish Congress. He, Orlemanski, thinks that the trip to the Polish Anny would take 10 days and he would be late for the opening of the Congress.

Comrade Stalin responds that Orlemanski could make a visit to the Polish Anny to see it and maybe to give his blessing. He would have a special train to do it. The trip to the Polish Anny and his return to Moscow would take no more than five or six days. Orlemanski could leave Moscow tomorrow at noon on the special train.

Orlemanski says that he will follow Stalin's advice and visit the Polish Anny.

Orlemanski asks to call a representative of the Associated Press to meet with him at 8 a.m. so that he could make a statement about his trip to Moscow.

Comrade Molotov responds that it will be done.

Orlemanski asks if he could visit Stalingrad, because when he returns to America, people will ask him whether he visited Stalingrad.

Comrade Stalin responds that his trip to Stalingrad could be organized.

Orlemanski states that when he returns to America he will inform the Soviet General Consulate in New York or the Soviet Embassy in Washington about his work. In tum, he would like to ask for a permission to call the Embassy and the General Consulate for information that interests him.

Comrade Stalin expresses his appreciation to Orlemanski, and says that of course he can call on our Embassy and the General Consulate for information that interests him.

Upon leaving, Orlemanski states that Comrade Stalin is doing miracles for his country and for his people, and that he will live through ages. He, Orlemanski, is very happy that he had an opportunity to meet with Stalin.

Comrade Stalin thanks Orlemanski for the present and asks him to pass his thanks to Orlemanski's sister for that present.

Orlemanski says, that the present is not very valuable as such, but Orlemanski's sister gave it to Stalin from all her heart. After the war, he, Orlemanski, would like to come here with his two sisters, and he would like to ask Stalin to give him a promise that he would receive them.

Comrade Stalin responds in the affirmative.

The conversation lasted for two hours.

Recorded by V. PAVLOV

Original

[\[1\]](#) Orlemansky is speaking about the conversation of April 26, 1944 in which they touched upon the issues of Polish post-war borders, Soviet-polish relations and others. (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 06, Finding aid 6.II.41. File 545, pp. 12- 16).