

December 6, 1944

**Conversation between General de Gaulle and
Marshal Stalin at the Kremlin 6 December 1944 from
18:00 to 19:45**

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Summary:

General de Gaulle and Marshal Stalin discuss the historical affinity between France and Poland, France's aim to support a Poland that can stand up to Germany in the future, France's support of the Curzon line as well as its insistence that Poland should remain an independent state. Stalin and de Gaulle discuss the concept of a "western bloc" of European nations, de Gaulle assures Stalin he has no aims to create such an alliance. De Gaulle reaffirms France's support for Poland as well as the need for friendship between France, Poland, and the USSR. They discuss the creation of a new league of nations.

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French

Contents:

Translation - English

CONVERSATION BETWEEN
GENERAL DE GAULLE AND MARSHAL STALIN

at the Kremlin December 6 1944 from 18:00 to 19:45

P.V.

Very secret

Present:

for the French:

General de Gaulle

Mr. Bidault

Mr. Garreau

Mr. Dejean

for the Soviets:

Marshal Stalin

Mr. Molotov

Mr. Bogomolov

Mr. Podzerov

General de Gaulle -- I asked to see you so that we could use our stay in Moscow to bring up a group of questions which we pose today and will pose tomorrow. We would very much like to hear your opinion, and we will give you ours, if you wish.

Marshal Stalin -- Please, continue.

General de Gaulle -- We have presented you with a plan for a pact related to the measures which France and the USSR could take for common security in regard to Germany. We shall discuss it. Surrounding this pact, there are a certain number of questions which should be clarified between us. Allow me to pose some specific questions. What I am about to say is firm and sincere.

There is the Polish affair.

Let me go back in history.

Marshal Stalin knows that, for a long time and for many different reasons--civilization, religion, and others, there has existed between France and Poland a sentimental rapport.

Marshal Stalin -- Yes, I know.

General de Gaulle -- For a long time France has tried to maintain an independent Poland in the midst of its neighboring states. We have not succeeded. Poland disappeared.

After the last war, France wanted a Poland capable of opposing Germany. This was the goal of French policy when we contributed to the recreation, after 1918, of an independent Polish state.

We know too well the consequences of the policies followed by Poland between the two wars. Beck's policy--and those of people similar to him--have greatly displeased us and have put us in grave danger, us as well as you.

We evaluate all the dangers to peace which might present themselves, particularly the danger to the Soviet Union posed by a Poland returning to previous policies with regard to a defeated Germany. We know that Germany has always wanted to use Poland for similar policies.

Marshal Stalin -- Germany wants to devour, to annihilate Poland. They have always wanted this.

General de Gaulle - Before devouring Poland, Germany will always try to use it. We French have an interest in creating conditions which would prevent Germany from doing so again. I say this because it is the truth.

We are not at all opposed to what Marshal Stalin said the other day about the western Polish border. We believe that such a solution would exclude an accord between Germany and Poland.

Marshal Stalin -- You are right.

General de Gaulle -- If, at the same time, the extension of Poland to the west could permit a solution to the problem of the eastern border, we would be in complete agreement.

Marshal Stalin -- The eastern border of Poland has been confirmed by Clemenceau. It is the Curzon Line.

General de Gaulle -- We have no objection to the Curzon Line, if Poland receives compensation to the west.

Marshal Stalin -- It is paramount that Poland receive these territories.

General de Gaulle -- I also believe that Poland should receive them.

Marshal Stalin -- It is an obligatory and necessary condition. Our army will do what is necessary to ensure it.

General de Gaulle -- That is a satisfying solution.

Marshal Stalin -- We believe so as well.

General de Gaulle -- In the meantime, we believe that Poland should remain an independent state, as Marshal Stalin has already said.

Marshal Stalin -- Certainly. There is not the least doubt on this subject.

General de Gaulle -- We know that the current situation has marred Polish spirits. We do not know exactly what the Polish people will think after their liberation by the Red Army. After the initial difficulties and bursts of emotion, a political situation might arise which is good from the point of view of the Poles and favorable for relations between Poland and France and the USSR.

I should tell the Soviet government that at such a time, and even presently, if France has the opportunity and possibility of acting on Polish desires, it will do so. We would do so in consulting with our allies, the USSR, Great Britain, and the United States.

As the Soviet government knows, we have had since the beginning maintained relations with the Polish government in London. This began with Sikorski and has

continued. As long as the Poles are not occupying their own territory, we have little business to conduct with them. We are watching the situation unfold. The truth will not appear until Polish territory is liberated. We are ready to exercise our influence over the Poles, over all the Poles, in the sense of a union between them, of their acceptance of the new frontiers, and of a genuinely friendly attitude towards France and the Soviet Union.

Marshal Stalin -- I understand.

General de Gaulle -- What else have we to discuss?

Marshal Stalin -- May I ask you what you mean by a western bloc?

General de Gaulle -- Can I ask the Marshal what he means by that? We have talked quite a bit about such a bloc. We are continentals. We do not imagine that the Empire [\[1\]](#) can be divided into several pieces. The idea of a western or eastern bloc, or a southern or northern bloc, means nothing in our eyes. We believe it is paramount to create certain practical things between people interested in the same practical matters. Basically there should be only one bloc in Europe, one made up of those people interested in not being attacked by Germany. That is why the first accord, which we pressed for after the liberation of France, is the one that we propose.

That being said, it is true that we have immediate neighbors: Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Italy. With these states we have certain arrangements to make since we live very close to each other. We will also, without doubt, have similar arrangements with Great Britain, as we do with Belgium, Luxembourg, and possibly Italy.

In spite of these arrangements, there is no bloc.

Marshal Stalin -- Pardon me for having posed such a needless question, if it put you in an odd situation.

General de Gaulle -- I know that there are some who have a different agenda.

Marshal Stalin - I've heard the declaration by Mr. Pierlot, stating that such a bloc exists.

General de Gaulle -- What could such a declaration mean?

Marshal Stalin -- I don't know. I asked you. I thought you would know.

General de Gaulle - Belgium has, in the past, concluded and denounced accords for its defense with Great Britain and France. Such arrangements do not make a bloc. Say that Belgium has things to exchange with France or with Great Britain and that it is necessary to make agreements in order to do so. Neither is this a bloc.

Marshal Stalin - I am accusing no one. I understand the situation in Belgium and the situation in France. Indeed France and Belgium need a solid alliance. I understand that France will also need alliances with bordering countries to prevent against German aggression.

General de Gaulle - In any case, as for what concerns us, and to end the discussion of blocs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bidault, recently made, in the name of the Government, a categorical declaration. England has never asked us to form a bloc. Nor have we asked England. We are looking to form a Moscow-Paris-London European bloc. All that remains are local arrangements. I have said so to Marshal Stalin. When

one looks closely at the question of blocs, there has, through the course of history, been the block of Germany and its allies, called the Triple Alliance and then the Axis, which could still reform. The other bloc is the Anglo-Franco-Soviet bloc.

Marshal Stalin -- I understand that.

General de Gaulle spoke several minutes ago, among other things, about a mutual assistance and security pact. I think that we could conclude one someday.

As for Poland, General de Gaulle knows that over the course of the past thirty years Poland has twice served as a corridor, as a passageway, for the German army to invade Russia. This cannot continue. The passageway must be closed, and it must be Poland itself who closes this passage. It should not be closed from the outside. In order to do this, we need a strong, independent, democratic Poland. A state cannot be strong if it is not democratic. We have an interest in a strong Poland. If Poland is strong, it will not be attacked again.

It is a question of doing an about-face, a turnaround in our policy. Up until this war Poland and Russia lived in a state of conflict. The Poles, over the course of several centuries, occupied Moscow twice. The Russians, two hundred years later, occupied Warsaw twice. This has not gone without repercussions in Polish-Russian relations. We would like to bring an end to this. The last war was a lesson. The Polish-Russian friendship is, for Poland and for Russia, the best guarantee against the German menace. This point of view is accepted by Russia and by better Polish elements. Such is the base of the new policy of Polish-Russian friendship.

History shows us a France both friendly to and protective of Poland and its independence. Herein lies the difference in attitude between France and the other powers towards Poland. The Poles know this. They can consider the current situation in which France will take a more favorable attitude towards them than will Great Britain or the United States. I have counted on and continue to count on this.

England is tied to the Polish government in exile just as it is tied to Mihailovitch in Yugoslavia. It is difficult for England to extract itself from that situation. At present Mihailovitch is hiding. He is not allowed to enter Yugoslavia. I fear that the same thing might happen to Giraud and Laval in the heart of the government in exile in London.

The political refugees in London are playing at being ministers. Another group in Lublin is doing the work. It has initiated agrarian reform similar to that undertaken in France in the late 18th century, which has served as a basis for French forces. There is a difference between the two groups. One is useless. That is the reason why the Soviet government established good relations with the new, reborn Poland represented by the Polish Committee for National Liberation. I thought that France understood that better than either England or America. I don't doubt that, at some point, Great Britain and the United States will come to understand.

General de Gaulle -- Do you have any information about the opinion of the Polish people as a whole?

Marshal Stalin - I keep an eye on it. I make observations.

General de Gaulle -- You are obviously better informed than anyone else.

Marshal Stalin - I wouldn't say that. I am interested. I study it .

General de Gaulle - The Marshal knows better than anyone else the inconvenience of constructing a government that public opinion will not support.

Marshal Stalin -- I can tell you why the situation of the Polish government in London has deteriorated.

The Polish population watched the Red Army advance, beat the Germans, win victories. As for the Red Army, they watched the Polish troops fight each other. They

asked themselves: where is the Polish government in London? Why isn't it in free Poland or freeing itself?

Another moment in the decline of the government in London corresponds to the crushing of the ill-fated insurrection in Warsaw. The Polish people learned that this insurrection had begun without the agreement of the Red Army commander. If the Poles had asked the Soviet government if it was ready to support the revolt, the government certainly would have said no. Our army had just advanced 600 kilometers from Minsk to Warsaw. Its artillery, its munitions were coming from bases situated a further 400 kilometers to the rear. Our troops were not ready to take Warsaw. The question was not asked. The people know that a costly adventure was launched. These are the agents of the government in exile who allowed Germany to gain the victory at Warsaw.

A third factor has arisen. The Lublin Committee has undertaken agrarian reform. Those officials were the victims of agents from the government in London. They took Polish land upon immigrating or leaving with the Germans. They sold them to the peasants. They accomplished what France herself had accomplished at the end of the 18th century, thus creating its authority as in a democratic state. It was under these conditions that the Polish Committee of Lublin acquired great strength. In parallel, according to information from the Soviet government, the influence of the Polish government in London receded.

General de Gaulle -- I repeat what I said in the beginning. We will see clearly after the liberation. If France has influence over the Poles, we will use it to unify them in friendship with France and with the Soviet Union.

Like other governments, France has relations with the Polish government in London. If there is cause to change that, we will do so in accord with our allies, as the USSR did in recognizing the French government.

On a point mentioned by Marshal Stalin I would like to make a small remark. There are some differences between Mr. Laval and General Giraud. These, whatever they have been, have never worked with the Germans.

Marshal Stalin -- I know about this difference. I don't want to get them together.

General de Gaulle -- And now, what does Marshal Stalin think of the situation in the Balkans?

Marshal Stalin -- We have chased the Germans to the fullest possible extent.

Bulgaria has accepted the conditions of armistice. These conditions will certainly be executed; Bulgarian independence will not be affected; Bulgaria will nevertheless receive the deserved punishment.

Our troops have not made advances in Greece. They are not accustomed to advancing simultaneously in all directions. The British navy and troops are in Greece. You should ask them about the situation. As for the Germans, they are leaving Greece. They have been forced to leave.

Yugoslavian independence has been restored. It should remain a federated state.

As for Romania, Mr. Molotov has made a declaration which remains in force.

Romania will be punished on the basis of the conditions of the armistice--but it will remain independent.

I think that a new national government will be formed in Hungary. The allies have conducted secret armistice negotiations with Horthy. The armistice is nearly concluded. The

Germans have learned of this, but we don't know how: Horthy has been arrested.

Yugoslavia is not entirely liberated. Some German troops remain. Unfortunately we cannot lend much assistance. But, we have helped and will continue to help.

If a democratic government is established in Hungary, we will lend it assistance in turning the situation around, against the Germans.

Such is the situation in the Balkans.

General de Gaulle -- Thank you, Marshal Stalin.

In three months, France has recovered its position and reorganized its forces little by little.

Our first gesture is to turn towards Moscow in order to clarify our position and to suggest a treaty.

As for the other states, we are happy to state that the Soviet Union wishes to see them move towards democracy and towards friendship with the USSR and France.

As we see it, the basis of a democratic regime lies with elections. Wherever possible, we would support such elections in countries which were enslaved by Germany and who are now regaining their freedom. We would like to work with our allies, and especially with the Soviet Union, in order to do what is necessary to develop this policy.

Marshal Stalin --I believe that we will come to an understanding.

It seems to me that General de Gaulle should have declined a visit to the "Normandy" group because of the time. He expressed a desire for the French pilots to come to Moscow. They will be here soon.

General de Gaulle -Thanks you, Marshal.

Marshal Stalin --There is no need for thanks; it is not difficult.

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Mr. Bidault broaches the subject of collective security. He wishes to speak in regard to the French government's vision of such a system of security.

Mr. Bidault -- The plan for a pact put forward by the French is based on an organization which is yet to be created. It is understood that this organization will not in any way alter the functioning of the pact. We want a system of collective security. But, the plan for a pact is inalterable.

Marshal Stalin - That is true for both parties.

Mr. Bidault - The collective organization does not remove anything from the pact which we plan to conclude.

As for collective security itself, the overall position of the French government is roughly the following:

1st It seems natural that collective organization would be assumed by and, to a large degree, directed by the great powers with the most weight in regard to political and military affairs. Thus, we believe that the unity of the great powers, in a realistic point of view, will not be broken, particularly in matters which concern the affairs of one or the other powers.

2nd It is essential to bring "smaller powers"--those with narrower interests--into the collective security association, in a way yet to be determined. This should not be done in order to keep the organization in check, but rather to allow these smaller powers to express their views and desires. On this point, there is no significant difference of opinion between the USSR and ourselves.

Marshal Stalin -- That is correct.

General de Gaulle -- As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated, we should not revisit the plenary sessions of the League of Nations, with an assembly of small

nations and the requirement of unanimity in order to take action. The assembly must be directed, by the agreement of the great powers, by those who furnish forces for use by the organization.

Mr. Bidault -- Furthermore we believe that these forces should not be made up of Heimatlos, but rather of contingents maintaining their national identity and put at the disposition of the collective organization, placed under its responsibility, have its commander.

Marshal Stalin -- It would be impossible to do otherwise.

Mr. Bidault -- We would also like the international organization to be enabled to assume the responsibility for the distribution primary materials and for guiding economic trends.

Marshal Stalin -- The collection and distribution of natural resources should be in the hands of an impartial and international organization. This is very difficult. But, it must happen. Military and economic functions are included in the Dumbarton Oaks Plan. Nothing which Mr. Bidault has said should go beyond the members involved with this plan.

Mr. Bidault -- But it is important that the project be published.

Marshal Stalin -- The point of view expressed by Mr. Bidault is near that of the Soviets and also, I believe, to the English position.

The collective security organization should take into account the needs for democracy and should form an assembly in which lesser powers are equally represented. The directing body of the organization should receive its mandate and its power from the assembly.

As for other matters, they appear clear to us.

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At the conclusion of the talks, Mr. Molotov returns the text of the Soviet government's proposed Franco-Russian pact to Mr. Bidault.

[\[1\]](#) Read, without a doubt, as "Europe."