

Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Józef Czyrek, September 23, 1988

Gorbachev: asks the Polish guest to what extent the outbreak of strikes reflects deep processes in the country and to what extent it represents the result of subversive actions of the opposition.

Czyrek: These events have several causes. The first is our weakness. In Katowice, where the strikes started, the administration dragged out the introduction of the “Miner’s Charter” for too long, even though the miners had demanded it for a long time. We should have started negotiations with them to establish fair wages. Now, as a result of shrinking rates for work on Saturdays and Sundays, they lost more than 30 percent of their salaries.

Another reason--during the reorganization implemented last fall, we preserved the old system of management in the coal industry, and multi-thousand strong collectives did not have their own self-government. The bureaucracy, which works like an army organization, allowed a gap to form between the collectives and the managerial apparatus. The mines were not granted the same rights that were given to the industrial enterprises, but instead agglomerations were created in the coal industry, which creates a concentration of a lot of bureaucrats, whom the workers see as free-loaders who live on their account. In addition, Katowice became something like a closed zone; the flow of information to the center was extremely poor.

Thirdly and finally, we saw the weakness of the party and state structures, and that many pressing problems were still unresolved. Secretaries of the party committees at the mines receive their salaries where they work, and so they are dependent on the local bosses. They could be paid 150,000 zlotys, or they could be paid 70,000 zlotys. There was no workers’ self-government, and therefore there was nobody to criticize them, make demands, and thus to ward off the worst. As far as Solidarity is concerned, its positions are not that strong in that region.

Gorbachev: This means that here we are seeing the expression of workers’ discontent.

Czyrek: Yes, recently we sent party journalists there and the miners told them very openly about everything. They did not feel any workers’ pride, they saw themselves as objects of manipulation. In the north, in Gdansk, the situation is entirely different; there they had a political strike.

Gorbachev: Why is Solidarity able to preserve its positions along the coast?

Czyrek: It has become a kind of tradition: the workers on the docks in a way are proud that they are an independent political force, initiators of the struggle for workers’ rights. Many young people who work on the docks, live in dormitories; the atmosphere there is quite overheated. Party organizations are essentially not involved with them.

Gorbachev: Would it be possible to create some targeted programs and try to remove the problems that have accumulated in the most vulnerable areas? Or does the government today, under conditions of the reform, simply not have a capacity to do that?

Czyrek: It is difficult to decide everything from the center, and the local party organizations, the local administrations are not very mobile. That is why the memory of Solidarity still lives among the people--not about Solidarity as it was in reality, but about an [imaginary] organization that would stand up and fight against indifference, the bureaucracy, and

so on. At the Plenum, we posed the issue this way: we have to immediately start solving problems that worry people, and to inform them about the measures being undertaken.

Gorbachev: During my trip to the Krasnoyarsk krai I had an additional opportunity to see that the people understand that there are problems that require time to be resolved, that we need to accumulate resources. But they are concerned that basic daily issues are not being resolved, for which one does not need millions, only simple human attention. There a bathhouse has not been built, here a roof is leaking, water pipes are not working ... And then they start to express their anger--where are the authorities? They should be all fired!

Czyrek: Yes, we got used to seeing those as "little things;" we spoke about grand causes and did not notice the most important things. Our enemies exploited that.

Gorbachev: Now new secretaries have come to several of the oblasts and started working with new energy. For instance, in Orel, Tula and Kursk. And the situation is changing fast. Even though they have not done much yet, the workers have started praising them already.

Czyrek: Today the number of demands in our society has grown rapidly, but the majority understands that they should not try to fulfill them through strikes. There is a societal need for a force that would uncover deficiencies, fight against bureaucratic inertia, and defend the interests of the workers. To our regret, we were unable to make the party organizations, labor unions into such an instrument. We were not able to make the PUWP simultaneously the ruling party and the opposition party.

Gorbachev: [...] In the past, we made appointments from above, and even if they were not bad people, they felt accountable only to the center. Now the situation is changing. Half of the party secretaries have already been changed, and the same will happen with the Soviets [councils].

I would like to ask the following question--could it happen that the change to the new system that you are now working on will be seen as a demonstration of the PUWP's inability to carry on its work? If that happened, the consequences could be dangerous.

Czyrek: This is a real problem for us. I suspect that our wise and experienced political opponent is trying to push the development of events in the country precisely in this direction.

Gorbachev: And this political opponent of yours, as you call it, how do you see it?

Czyrek: It is diverse--it is the anarcho-syndicalists, simple anti-communists, and an element of the Church. [Józef Cardinal] Glemp is not a part of it. Opposition sentiments are especially prevalent among the intelligentsia. First of all, it is those who left the party, the renegades, such as [Jacek] Kuroń and [Adam] Michnik. They used to be members of the PUWP, even left-wingers, created a youth organization of the so-called Red Khazars.¹ Then they got into a confrontation with the leadership, were subjected to repressive measures, and changed their banners.

Gorbachev: Anarcho-syndicalism is the rejection of the existing order. Do they have any positive program?

¹ The original Khazars were a semi-nomadic people of Turkic origin; between the 7th and 10th centuries they lived in what is today southern Russia, eastern Ukraine, and parts of the Caucasus.

Czyrek: This is their weakness: they don't have one, just plain rejection. They switched to the other side of the barricades, but kept the radicalism of their views, and now they are waging the main attack against the party.

Gorbachev: Are they able to influence the workers because of the weakness of the party organizations?

Czyrek: They have some decent propagandists, but not enough forces for any fundamental actions. That is why they are constantly trying to ingratiate themselves with something else. In the past, they toadied to the Solidarity movement, and now they are trying to hook up with what is left of it. If we assess their influence now, we could say that this extremist wing was unable to capture the leadership of the opposition. By the way, they were the only ones who argued against the negotiations underway now.

Gorbachev: I would like to understand this better--is your method of resolving the situation really commensurate with the scale of events, or maybe you--please don't be offended--are starting to panic a little bit? Maybe you should try to resolve concrete problems without undertaking major steps effectively legitimizing the opposition?

Czyrek: This is how the situation developed. We made a decision--to preserve the government until the end of the year, then to evaluate its performance and decide what to do with it in the future. Events speeded up this scenario, not even due to the strikes so much, but rather because of the deterioration of the economic situation. Inflation rose, market supplies worsened, people got worried, and the basis of social stability was undermined. Against this background, our trade unions have moved forward into battle. They are not very strong *per se*, but their leadership is very dynamic, such as the OPZZ [All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions] and Chairman [Alfred] Miodowicz. They used the opportunity to express the public mood and by doing that to strengthen their positions. And because we have always tried to give them greater weight, we decided not to interfere with it.

Gorbachev: Obviously this is the right thing to do. Otherwise, Solidarity would win.

Czyrek: Yes, the party ranks have become smaller recently, but the labor unions have kept their positions among the working class. They include 52 percent of working people. But the price of that gain was the government crisis.

Medvedev: At least the labor unions won.

Czyrek: They are our first barrier against Solidarity. Importantly, public opinion maintains too that the government was toppled not by the strikes, but by the labor unions. They even say that the party did it with its own hands.

Gorbachev: In other words, let the critical voice exist, if it is not directed against socialism and the party leadership. Is that true, however, in reality?

Czyrek: It is hard to say; there are different views [among the opposition], but the wing we are negotiating with--Wałęsa and a part of the Church--seem to accept the realities existing in Poland.

Gorbachev: And what is their philosophy?

Czyrek: They think approximately as follows: there should be a ruling party in every society, and since Poland has a socialist regime, therefore the party should be socialist too. But [the party] itself should be very different.

Gorbachev: So they are not questioning the socialist choice?

Czyrek: Moreover, they are even saying that the Church in general has now moved to a position equidistant from capitalism and socialism. John Paul II criticizes both this regime and that regime in order to show that the only wise choice is the Church. In the past, Church figures claimed that socialism was the devil's invention. Now they have understood the irreversibility of the social changes, and even though the bourgeois order is closer to Wojtyła's² heart, he has to accept the reality. Many prominent figures of the Church, including Professor Stelmachowski,³ are saying that the Christian doctrine is closer to socialism than to capitalism, but as far as freedom of religion is concerned, here they give preference to the West.

Essentially, we have a great task before us--to reconcile the Church with socialism. We took this road with a full understanding of how high the stakes were. If the Polish experiment succeeds, it will have great importance for all countries with strong religious beliefs. We don't have any [selfish] ambitions, we are not doing it to be the first [...]

Gorbachev: The majority of your population are believers; one has to take that into account.

Czyrek: As a whole, the Polish Church is in favor of national conciliation, but of course it is trying to realize some gains from it, first of all by strengthening its influence in education and in the mass media. The position and the mood of the bishops is not clear-cut. The conservative faction of the bishops argues for recognition and the full legalization of Solidarity. That faction enjoys the Pope's support. Another part, represented by Glemp, considers a revival of Solidarity in its present form impossible.

Now I will talk about the party, and about its leading role. Here we are working on several directions. If we don't resolve the economic and social problems, it will be difficult for the PUWP to justify its right to be the leader. Will the party succeed in becoming the vanguard force in the Polish perestroika? Here is a paradox, one could say, an unfairness [in the party situation]: The party is promoting novel methods, notwithstanding resistance in its own ranks, but society nonetheless sees it as a conservative force, which is defending its interests and its officials. This is the tragedy of our party.

Gorbachev: This is a very important issue. In the assessment, in the analysis of the past, in our country too, there are statements that the party is to blame for many things. There are not many, but such voices come through. They say that what happened under Stalin and under Khrushchev and under Brezhnev--these are all the deeds of the Communists. They complain that today perestroika is proceeding slowly. In order to prevent the spread of such sentiments we have to transform the party, and make its policies and the cadres more dynamic. In our country, not all party officials understood the essence of the moment. From this fact comes the need to have a turnover of personnel, especially locally. The entire trip to the Krasnoyarsk krai was essentially

² Karol Wojtyła was John Paul II's name before he became pope.

³ Andrzej Stelmachowski was an academic and Solidarity activist who became marshal of the Polish Senate in 1989 and later minister of education.

devoted to these issues. People do not doubt perestroika, but believe that [local] leadership, local bureaucrats are blocking it.

Now the situation is gradually changing. In that same Krasnoyarsk krai, they have already replaced half of their leading cadres, and they were choosing from several candidates. I have to admit, initially we had different plans. However, when we approved the course to democratize the party, including the apparatus, then we understood that we could not drag it out, and at the conference⁴ we made the appropriate decision--not to wait for the congress, [but] to begin the process of renewing the party.

Coming back to your affairs, I want to ask--does the working class understand that it needs such a party? Does it associate its interests with the PUWP?

Czyrek: What I just said about the weakness of the party primarily concerns the attitude of the working class toward [the party]. In the intelligentsia circles, our innovating policy is seen more clearly. The working class looks at it as if from below--[as something that] has been done by the bosses, by the party secretaries, in practice. And because there is a lot of ugliness and inaction there, many people do not consider the PUWP their own, workers' party. Often one hears expressions that nobody listens to the workers, that they don't have any influence in the party.

Gorbachev: Could it be that the leadership focused on improving contacts with the intelligentsia, which in itself is important and difficult, and somewhat dropped the work with the "class base"?

Czyrek: You see, we tried, we went to the factories, held meetings of worker activists, a plenum with worker participation. But the trouble is that the economic situation is hurting their interests. They see that life is easier for the peasants, not even mentioning the private sector. They say, "you are creating conditions for multimillionaires, but what are workers left to do?" In short, the key to correcting the situation is in the economy.

Gorbachev: In short, you need to solve concrete problems, without forcing the creation of new institutions and arrangements too much. You have already done a lot in this direction, and we are looking closely at your experience [as we] reform our own political system. But still the main thing now is the [existence of] concrete problems, and the lack of a resolution could undermine any political regulation, even the smartest kind. And how are the peasants behaving?

Czyrek: They are not going on strike, because peasants never strike anyway. However, there is discontent about the fact that the prices for industrial products are rising faster than the prices for food. In the last two years the profitability of agriculture has fallen by 18 percent. But this discontent is not taking on a political character, it is spilling over into economic demands. The village also is trying to achieve greater freedom in the organization of economic life. Now our local organs do whatever they want.

I am recounting everything that worries us, but there are no grounds for panic. Nobody is demand that we transfer the factories to private hands. They say: yes to socialism, no to drawbacks! As I already said, they do not support the strikes. They demand more effective action by the party and the state. They say: we will support you if you work energetically, and do not permit decreases in living standards.

⁴ The XIX Party Conference.

Our strategic line remains the same--it is to rely on the broad coalition of social forces. And our tactic is to split the opposition, and to pull the more realistic segment into negotiations, to co-opt the banner of Solidarity along with Wałęsa, to isolate the extremists, and start a fight with them. The Church is also afraid of anarcho-syndicalism and in the worst case will keep their neutrality. They do not want confrontation, and they do not want to share influence with Kuroń and Michnik. We think that there is now a chance to employ this tactic, and that is why we decided to negotiate. We received signals from the Church and from Wałęsa about their readiness for compromise. We got “whispers” from the West along the same lines. There was of course, the choice--to start this ourselves, or to let them take the initiative. We thought for a long time and then Jaruzelski decided to take it upon himself. It was not easy to persuade the Central Committee.

Gorbachev: But when you, in your expression, co-opt the Solidarity banner along with Wałęsa, wouldn't that be interpreted as your agreeing to its revival?

Czyrek: Those concerns exist in the party. There will be no return to Solidarity. At the same time, however, we admitted that there is a problem with the Polish model of a labor movement. The closed model, which we created, is imperfect. Where is our thinking taking us? We need unity in the labor movement, but a unity based on pluralistic principles. In other words, we reject the Italo-French form of labor movement, and adopt the Austrian and West German [version] as our basis. There, every enterprise has one labor union, with one council, but within it various clubs are represented--socialists, communists, and Christian Democrats.

Gorbachev: So, one enterprise could have two labor organizations, but they would have a joint council?

Czyrek: Wałęsa and others agree to hold negotiations on the basis of the provisions of the Law on Labor Unions, which was adopted in 1981. It says: one labor union at each enterprise. We want to act on that basis. One labor union, and a joint council, which could be constituted from various groups and clubs. Of course, Wałęsa and his supporters will fight for going beyond that framework, but, as Stelmachowski tried to convince me, ultimately they will agree to the type of pluralism that we are offering. They also are showing signs of weariness, because at most enterprises they are not supported, but on the contrary are criticized.

It is hard for me to say what is the influence of the international factor on the actions of the opposition. One thing is clear--they have no choice but to praise perestroika. The positive attitude toward the changes is so great [in Poland] that the opposition cannot allow itself to speak against it. Sometimes our people even praise us for it, even though we are lagging behind you and need to learn more from you.

Gorbachev: But first of all you should think about solving concrete problems, taking into account the situation in the country.

Czyrek: Yes, of course. I want to say that smart people “from the other side” understand the need for agreement under the present conditions. There the international factor also has a direct influence. I suspect that the Americans and West Germans are not pushing the Polish opposition toward confrontation, but rather to the opposite--advising it to accept the dialog. How much of it is due to your influence? I don't know. But the overall situation, the new thinking are doing their share. Representatives of the White House kept beating on us like a drum in the past, and now they are saying that we should strive for conciliation.

Gorbachev: But the main thing is the mood of the masses. They are also sick and tired of confrontations, which are still promoted by some people like Kissinger and Brzezinski ... And what is the government going to be like?

Czyrek: We came to the conclusion that in the present conditions we should not establish relations between the party and government based on the old principles. It is necessary that political forces take part in a coalition and determine the direction of the policy, and that its implementation be the business of the government. And it should not be the case that the government would point a finger at the party, but the party would not be able to criticize it [in return], because it is, so to speak, "our government." The party cannot be a guarantor of everything, and cannot cover every stupid [action] and mistake made in the course of governing. Jaruzelski will speak about this explicitly from the podium of the Sejm. If the government does not carry out the political line consistently, it should bear the responsibility. The party will not interfere in concrete decisions. The people should know that we are not deciding who should get what salary.

Of course the party cannot completely avoid responsibility for the government. Messner⁵ is a good person, he has done everything he could. But if mistakes were made, it was not because the Politburo bound his hands. And such efforts--to shift the blame from the government onto the party--do take place.

Gorbachev: But the party, obviously, cannot limit its functions, and the first among them is to appoint the government and to determine state policy.

Czyrek: Of course not, but we will not work out the details. There are experts for that. As far as the new government is concerned, there is no decision yet. Some people believed that it should be primarily a collegium of experts, but we did not agree with that. It would look like the party was unable to form a full-fledged cabinet. Therefore, we will argue that it should be headed by a politician. We are looking at several people. There was the candidacy of [Roman] Malinowski, the chair of the OKP [Citizens' Parliamentary Group] but we rejected it. It would seem like the PUWP was hiding around the corner, and within the party there would be dissatisfaction with the fact that we were giving away such a serious position. Malinowski himself, however, entertained such ambitions; he wanted to become head of the government of national unity.

Gorbachev: Some kind of Piłsudski? Father of the nation?

Czyrek: Something like that. He is a capable person, but he has some weaknesses. The second candidate is Baka⁶, a hard-working person. But here in Poland, they are afraid of professors. Besides, he could be criticized as one of the authors of the reform, which so far has not brought any major results. And we think that it would be good for him to work on deepening the reform without being prime minister.

⁵ Zbigniew Messner, the prime minister since November 1985, was forced to relinquish his post just a few days after this conversation, following an unprecedented no-confidence vote in the Sejm.

⁶ Władysław Baka, a professor of economics, was government plenipotentiary for economic reform from 1981-1985, president of the National Bank of Poland from 1985-1988 and 1989-1991, and a Politburo member in 1989.

Kiszczak's⁷ candidacy was put forward. He is a good organizer, a disciplined person, and has a lot of experience from the martial law period.⁸ But it would not be very good if there was one more general. At this point, Kiszczak will be kept in reserve, just in case he is needed.

The next figure is Rakowski, an experienced, capable person. However, he is not an economist. But that is not necessary with a well-constituted government. He had some breakouts before, but in the end he became strongly engaged in the policy of renewal. His nomination would be a signal to the Church and to Solidarity, who take him seriously. On the other hand, the labor union would treat him positively, and a favorable attitude from journalists and the intelligentsia would be assured. Recently he has done some good work in the party, and gained a reputation as a creative person, and even those people whom you might call our fundamentalists have come to support him.

Gorbachev: Does he have far-reaching ambitions?

Czyrek: He does have ambitions, but because they would be covered by our common interests, this is not dangerous. The main thing is to make sure that the personal does not prevail over the public. Jaruzelski knows him better; he sees his weaknesses but believes that we can overcome them. To what extent this assessment is accurate--you should speak to Jaruzelski himself.

Gorbachev: My task is to ask questions. We feel okay [neplokho] about Rakowski. You said it right--that he has drawn certain lessons, gained experience, turned from a journalist into a politician, and undoubtedly possesses the intellect and the capabilities. But we heard--this is a completely confidential conversation, just for you and for Comrade Jaruzelski--that behind the aggravation of the situation in Poland are attempts to take shots at Wojciech Władysławowicz [Jaruzelski]. Some people are interested in this, and it is connected with the behavior of Rakowski. I decided not to mention it to Jaruzelski during my conversation with him.

Czyrek: I have no grounds to say whether that is so, but many of my friends mention Rakowski's ambitious nature... I value his intellect and I know that he would be afraid to be the prime minister for long because a person in that position exhausts himself very quickly, burns up. It might be that he would start fighting to become first secretary by transferring Jaruzelski to the presidency. I told Jaruzelski about that, just like I am telling you now, so my conscience is clean.

Gorbachev: Poland needs Jaruzelski. He not only has not exhausted his capabilities, but on the contrary is playing the key role. You should not allow a split in the PUWP at this stage of Poland's development under any conditions.

Czyrek: So far, it is [Tadeusz] Porębski⁹ who has mainly been acting in this direction. He has been actively inciting the club (factions) of the PUWP in the Sejm against the party leadership. Recently, he wrote a letter to Jaruzelski agreeing with the change of government, but pointing out that none of the above-mentioned persons could be prime minister. He says that if any of them is nominated, he will retain his right to speak against him publicly. Jaruzelski was

⁷ General Czesław Kiszczak was minister of the interior from 1981-1990 and briefly served as prime minister in August 1989. He was a close associate of Jaruzelski.

⁸ Martial law was declared on December 13, 1981, to deal with the Solidarity crisis.

⁹ Tadeusz Porębski, a professor, was chairman of the PUWP Parliamentary Club from November 1985-June 1989, a Politburo member until December 1988, and deputy speaker of the Sejm from June 1988-June 1989.

going to talk to him, but I said that a person who is opposed to the policy of the first secretary should not be the leader of our deputies' club in the Sejm.

Gorbachev: Your position is very important.

Czyrek: My position is to help Jaruzelski. I believe that he should lead Poland onto a straight and stable road. We do not have any other person with his capabilities. A split in the party would be deadly. However, I do not see such a danger right now. Most likely, somebody will be waiting for the all-Polish conference of delegates to the X Congress of the PUWP (March 1989) and will try to replicate the Hungarian example. But we do not have the same situation. Those forces that are against Jaruzelski are also against the policy of perestroika. There are not too many of them.

Briefly about some other issues. We have entered the path of dialog. It has already produced some fruits. For example, the opposition has stopped threatening a wave of strikes. A split is discernible in the opposition camp; some are already calling Wałęsa a collaborator. If we succeed in co-opting Wałęsa, who still remains a symbol both in the country and abroad, the opposition will be weakened substantially.

Gorbachev: Just do not forget about the time interval, so that the shift from treating Wałęsa as anathema to integrating him into the renewal process is not too sudden. Otherwise that could create the impression that you have panicked.

Czyrek: We have considered that. In practice, the changes will not be instantaneous; the elections to the Sejm will take place in a year. And now the conditions for negotiations consist of an atmosphere of calm and reasonableness. One more thing--not to reinstitute Solidarity; that would be hard to achieve, but we will be striving for it. And thirdly--to look for conciliation at the main intersections of the societal model, to try to work out a joint electoral platform and an agreement on the distribution of seats in the Sejm. We are thinking along these lines: to keep 40 percent for the PUWP, to give 20 percent to the Council of Trade Unions and DP, 10 percent to the independents, and 20 percent to the constructive opposition, which acts on the basis of the agreement. If the issue is resolved this way, then after the elections we could form a government of national unity that includes representatives of the constructive opposition. But in this case, there will be problems with Rakowski's candidacy. The opposition has big problems with him. However, it might be that by that time he would be able to improve the situation, if the elections don't lead him too far.

On Saturday, we will have a Politburo session, and after that a meeting of the conciliatory commission with the participation of allied parties. On Monday, a Plenum of the Central Committee, and in the evening the deputies club in the Sejm. At the Sejm session, Jaruzelski, on behalf of all political forces will introduce a proposal for Rakowski's candidacy for the premiership. It will take several days to form the government--to consult with the parties, trade unions, and independent figures. This is a question of political culture, and one should not regard it as [simply] theater.

Gorbachev: Are you going to continue negotiations with the so-called constructive opposition?

Czyrek: First of all, the Roundtable will convene. It will be truly round--because we do not want Wałęsa sitting alone across from Kiszczak; there will be allied parties, trade unions.

In the process of establishing contacts on the eve of the "Roundtable" we have encountered a number of concrete problems. We are considering offering the post of deputy prime minister, and a number of ministers' and deputy ministers' portfolios to the opposition. In general, they agree that the structure of the Sejm should be decided not at the elections, but on the basis of the proposed agreement at the center. In any case, at the negotiations we will emphasize--and this also seems not to cause objections--that we are not talking about creating a political party but about representing opposition groups in the Sejm and in the [upper house of the] parliament. So far the issue of creating new political parties has not come up. The Church does not raise this issue either, because, in the opinion of the Polish leadership, they do not see it in their interests. There have been no statements to this effect from Solidarity either, although naturally it would be hard to give guarantees for the future.

In terms of societal structure, it would be reasonable to envisage creating some new institutions through which the ambitions of society could be satisfied. Experience with the catholic clubs shows that they remain [just] clubs, without turning into political parties. With the help of similar steps we are hoping to split the political opposition away from the trade union [opposition]. We are not afraid of the latter, and their political activities would be placed within a defined framework, although naturally one should not close one's eyes to the possibility of certain shifts.

As far as economic reform is concerned, we have no substantial discussions or differences with the opposition. They do not have their own program, and so the discussion of pluses and minuses is being conducted around proposals originating from the PUWP. In the final analysis, coordination on political, economic and social problems could lead to the creation of a joint electoral program of a national coalition.

As our positions move closer toward one another, a council of national conciliation, which would develop a joint electoral program, could be created on the basis of the "Roundtable." [...]

In the forthcoming period, we envisage that in addition to the big "Roundtable," with many people around it, we will organize five "little Roundtables" on separate issues (political reform, social reform, economic reform, problems of the village and agriculture, and the trade union model), and to conduct further work within those frameworks. All of this work is being conducted under the direct leadership of the Politburo, and of W. Jaruzelski. Members of the Central Committee and the leaders of regional PUWP committees are regularly being informed about it.

Gorbachev: Will Jaruzelski mention these negotiations?

Czyrek: In a general form, in the context of unity and conciliation. We will continue our stance for conciliation, regardless of whether it is with Wałęsa or without him.

Gorbachev: Thank you for deciding to inform the CPSU leadership. Everything that happens in Poland is very important to us. The choice you and I made is difficult, but necessary. In essence, we both strive to solve an important task, which is to develop the potential of a socialist system. This brings us even closer together as friends and colleagues. Our parties require collaboration and the preservation and strengthening of Soviet-Polish relations. This is necessary for the strategic interests of our country. We are in solidarity with your actions, we understand the challenges facing Poland, and the significance of the period you are going

through. This is what I think: if [your actions] were characterized by a hasty forfeiting of positions, then we might have some doubts. But you are following political channels that were defined ahead of time, and your methods of overcoming difficulties seem reasonable. I asked you some tough questions. All the possibilities need to be accounted for, including the worst-case scenario. The West could once again paint everything in this light: The leadership yields and Solidarity wins. We have to try to ensure there is no impression that this is a defeat of the PUWP. You have all you need to conduct this matter with confidence, calmly, and prudently. You rightly see the risk that an opposition political party might create. The trade unions also have to stay united, so there is no threat of opposition forming under the roof of Solidarity.

This is how we understand the situation in Poland. Of course, these are your issues and you will be solving them. As we understand it, the question of Rakowski as the head of the government is decided

Czyrek: This is Cde. Jaruzelski's choice, which I support under the circumstances. The Politburo does not know about this yet.

Medvedev: There are ambiguous feelings about him.

Czyrek: Everybody knows about his ambitions.

Gorbachev: Perhaps this is good. I think his political experience could be useful if he does not see this post as a trampoline to fight for a higher one. This could complicate the situation, and Jaruzelski should be protected.

Czyrek says that he is planning a proposal that would require Jaruzelski to take a vacation.

Gorbachev: We are waiting for him [to come].

Czyrek says a heartfelt thank-you for the conversation.

The understanding and good relations with our Soviet friends means a great deal to us. Jaruzelski asked me to convey warm greetings and to assure you that we will act in the spirit of your conversation with him. He felt much better after a long conversation with you over the phone.

We are fully aware that both parties want to infuse socialism with a new dynamism, so that our people can develop their creative forces. We understand the significance of what is happening in the USSR. In this sense, Poland is your testing ground. We have a feeling of responsibility before our own people, and before the common goal.

I have two requests. The development of joint enterprises is stuck right now because of pricing trends. Your representatives make calculations based on internal prices without taking into consideration governmental subsidies, while our representatives calculate based on our prices.

Gorbachev: The same problem persists in all the [socialist] countries.

Czyrek: Maybe we should adopt the principle of world prices? And one more question. We would be grateful for your support of the PUWP in its relations with the United Trade Union Committee. We have high regard for the position you presented in Warsaw, and the telegram for the united trade union committee congress.

Gorbachev: We should include this in the program for inter-party contacts.

Czyrek: We also thank you for your support of our policies in regard to the Church. Glemp's visit to Byelorussia consolidated his position in the Vatican, and he is behaving decently. It might seem strange, but we would also like to ask for help with the opposition. There are differing views [among the opposition], and certain confrontational forces; but in general they have to acknowledge that socialism is the core of the country's development.

Gorbachev: If you have specific proposals, let us know so that the MFA and the International Department can take some action.

Czyrek: The last point concerns the forthcoming meeting between you and Kohl. The West Germans and the Americans hold the key to our debt; they are our major creditors. You could help to exert some influence on them.

Gorbachev: Perhaps you have specific proposals about this, as well? As for general support in principle, there is no question about that.

[Source: Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, Opis 2. On File at the National Security Archive
Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya.]