

Memorandum of Conversation

18 October 1986

P r o m e m o r i a

for H.E. rev. Abp. Bronislaw Dabrowski about a conversation in the Belvedere held on 18 October 1986 by A. Swiecicki, J. Turowicz, and A. Wielowieyski with Vice Chairman of the Council of State, K. Barcikowski, member of the Council of State K. Secomski, and Secretary of the CC PUWP, St. Ciosek, concerning a Social Consultative Council.

The conversation started at about 9 a.m. and lasted three and a half hours. K. Barcikowski referred to questions which he had received from the Episcopate. He expressed their mutual lack of trust. The proposal [for the Council] is new and startling. It would be the only means to get involved in difficult decisions. Participation in [the proposed Council] is a matter of citizenship, a duty. Its composition [is] well balanced: 30-40 people [would be involved] for certain (but there are proposals to expand that list and to invite other people on an ad hoc basis). Of the Catholics from the circles close to the Episcopate, 8-10 people [would be active]. Besides representatives of the [ruling] party and other parties, non-party people, including those not connected with the authorities (but not extremists, who are re-activating the “S[olidarity]” structures) [would also actively participate].

The proposed Consultative Council is meant to increase trust and develop recommendations, which the Chairman of the Council of State (Gen. Jaruzelski) would pass on to the proper state organs as important proposals. Its effectiveness will depend on the authority [that it can command]. There will be a place for the opinions of its members, and the circles to which they belong. The Consultative Council has to work out some consensus.

The Consultative Council would be set up by the Chairman of the Council of State personally and not by the Council of State as such, which has too narrow a range of responsibilities and competence.

A possible range of activities of the Council [is] building: 1) social understanding, 2) functioning of the State, 3) conditions for economic progress, 4) scientific-technical progress, 5) development of socialist democracy, 6) current and prospective social policy, 7) environmental protection, 8) improvement of the moral condition of society; as well as other important matters.

The creation of approximately ten similar “citizens’ convents” for larger agglomerations or several *voivodships* [districts] and also the appointment of a Citizens’ Rights Ombudsman is expected.

K. Barcikowski, referring to a note he received at the beginning of the meeting from A. Wielowieyski, said that there is some skepticism toward these proposed bodies, but that he was sure that a “façade counts too.” Criticism towards consultative bodies is incorrect, anyway, as they are actively operating.

Taking a position on particular points of the “Note”

—he called into question an assertion that union pluralism is indispensable for the longer term;

—he expressed surprise that Catholics would aim at forming associations and said that the authorities might take a position on this matter, but only if all the interested parties would first take a position toward the proposed Council (ref. to question 8);

—in schools one can see an aversion shown by Catholics (question 9);

—[he said that] the demand that the Council be representative creates the impression that it was to be made according to a “prescription;”

—[he noted that] the question of informing public opinion about the workings of the Council requires further thought; certainly discretion will be needed (question 5);

—[he questioned if] the participation in the Council, of people connected with the authorities (e.g. with the Party) mean that only people opposed to the authorities should be in the Council? (to question 6—it would be an issue to raise);

—[he said that] consultations with Walesa are not being foreseen without [Walesa] fulfilling conditions which the government’s spokesman talked [about] (on TV), i.e. cutting himself off from other “S” leaders;

He thought the note was one-sided.

Subsequently a mutual clarification of positions took place.

A. Wielowieyski stated that the configuration of social forces is very unfavorable to efforts to overcome the crisis due to the fact that the majority of society is passive, has no confidence and is skeptical towards the authorities. The greatest need is to create a self-identity—that is how he explained the need for pluralism and having the proper representation of other social groups—identity indispensable for improving the climate and for the defense of the needs of those groups.

A. Swiecicki talked about gradual realization of the principle of pluralism. He pointed to: 1) a need to create an educational environment, 2) pressure for secularization in schools (study of religions and verification of teachers) is stimulating a fighting attitude among the clergy, and 3) representation of particular segments of society in the Consultative Council should match the prestige and significance of people proposed (there are indications that people who are invited are not representative of those social segments.)

He emphasized several times that Catholic associations were better educationally, since they were more independent than the parishes, but they could be formed only as local organizations.

J. Turowicz pointed out that “normalization” is perceived negatively by society and seen as a means of reinforcing the totalitarian system. The need to reform the system was broadly felt. He did not think that Catholics should be in majority in the Council, but he questioned the way the extremists were being defined (e.g. Mazowiecki or Geremek are counted as part of that group, but these are, after all, reasonable and moderate people).

As far as the names of people for the Council from the government side [are concerned], these could not be compromised names. He repeated arguments about a possible ineffectiveness and ostentatiousness of the Council, and also about the need for school neutrality.

Towards the end of the discussion he emphasized that social pluralism is a fact, and that the institutions in which society could broadly participate could not be licensed exclusively. He also raised the possibility of a role not only for Catholic associations, but for the others too (e. g. he mentioned D and P).

A. Wielowieyski, referring to K. Barcikowski's words about social organizations, mentioned, among other things, a particular feeling of helplessness on the part of peasants towards the political and economic apparatus governing the countryside (agricultural and mechanical associations), associations in which even heads of the communities are helpless.

K. Barcikowski referring to the above-mentioned matter said (without denying the fact) [that] this would not be easy to fix soon.

—took an unwilling position toward the creation of associations; said the parishes are acting legally, with the authorities' consent, while there had been talk at the Joint Commission about associations, long ago; says that the more the Church gets, the more it wants (there was unwillingness, but not a decisive refusal);

—he evaluated Walesa critically;

—he did not exclude altogether union pluralism in the future though it was inadmissible [now];

—it was difficult to commit to cooperation with people, who were declaring [their] hostility;

—defended pro-governmental social organizations (they were “alive”[active, not moribund]);

—expressed regret that in 1956 religion was not left in schools; since the Church had created its own network of religious teaching, and the “state secular school” was just a response to that network and it had to defend itself against the Church;

—you were making a mistake, you wanted to sell us an “angel” (some kind of an ideal society, which doesn't exist), your promises will eventually shrink, the Church doesn't have influence on attitudes toward work; however, towards the end of the discussion, to an argument that the Church nevertheless has had influence on moderation and non-violence within society, he did not oppose it, but said that, after all, both sides have been temperate;

—he emphasized that, after all, all proposals from this talk would have to be approved by the party;

—we appreciated you very much, but we can dispense with your advise, we announced amnesty for political reasons, but we would not have done it if it would have complicated the situation in the country;

—the amnesty had moved the intelligentsia circles tremendously, but for the workers it did not mean much;

—you were maximalists; I did not see a rapprochement; my opinion was authoritative. I did not exclude further talks, but our proposals were not going to change much, we would not come up with concessions because we did not have to. Both sides had been involved, and if it did not work, the country will have to pay for it;

—haste is not in our interest.

Stanislaw Ciosek

—recalled the negative results of pluralism in 1980/1981 and rejected it, arguing that the whole world has a totalitarian system;

—the curve of social expectations was declining, and no revolts or tragedies were going to happen now;

—he said he knew the report “5 Years After August [1980],” prepared by “Solidarity’s” advisers, but we knew it even better, and that was why we wanted to do something together with you to prevent [Poland from] becoming a colony of a stronger state.

K. Secomski spoke briefly and didn’t bring up anything of importance.

Done by:
Andrzej Wielowieyski

[Source: Stanislaw Stomma Papers. Translated by Jan Chowanec for CWIHP.]