From the diary of the USSR Ambassador to Great Britain F.T. Gusev, 8 August 1944.

MINUTES OF CONVERSATION WITH THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION BRENDAN BRACKEN[[1]](#footnote-1)

On July, 26 Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information, invited me for breakfast at the Ministry of Information. Attending the breakfast were: Lyttelton[[2]](#footnote-2), Minister of State for War Production, Smollett[[3]](#footnote-3), head of the Russian section of the Ministry of Information, Ronald Tree[[4]](#footnote-4), MP and the employee of the Ministry of Information. During the conversation at breakfast Bracken touched upon the following issues:

I. Bracken began the conversation about the remarkable success of the Red Army and said that the Red Army was promptly moving ahead and brought new victories daily. A Ministry of Information official asked me how many days will it take for the Red Army to enter Warsaw[[5]](#footnote-5). I answered that it is impossible to determine the timing and the Red Army approach isn’t an easy march as some British newspapers try to describe it, being engaged in measurement of distances and not describing the huge efforts made by the Red Army in destroying the manpower and equipment of enemy. I mentioned that concerning the Red Army, it is now clear to everyone, what success in the struggle against the enemy was achieved by the Red Army in the last 30 days. […] Now rather favourable conditions have been for the Allies, when the Germans’ defence at the east front is broken, a considerable number of German divisions are defeated and the Red Army continues to approach with a persistent speed. If Allied armies try to use these favourable conditions, intolerable conditions will be created for Germany. Bracken agreed with my opinion and said that the Allies could finish the war by the end of this year. I remarked that this will depend first of all on how all the Allies’ armies will fight against the enemy. During the conversation Bracken mentioned twice that the Allies may be able to end the war by the end of this year[[6]](#footnote-6).

2. At breakfast, Bracken devoted a considerable part of the time to Poles, and, in particular, to praising of Mikolajczyk. Bracken said that Mikolajczyk sincerely wanted to come to an agreement with the Soviet government and that his trip to Moscow[[7]](#footnote-7) for negotiations with Marshal Stalin and the representatives of the Polish Committee could have important results for establishing unity among the United Nations both during the war and after the defeat of Germany. I remarked that so far there were no signs of Mikolajczyk striving to cooperate with the Soviet government. The last communiqué of the Polish government published yesterday speaks for itself[[8]](#footnote-8). […] “The Polish Ministry of Information with its numerous newspapers causes us many troubles,” said Brendan Bracken. I remarked that if Bracken would wish it to be so, then he could easily reduce these troubles, having deprived Poles of a possibility to get paper for printing of their newspapers. Brendan said that they managed to close 17 Polish newspapers. I remarked that he could have closed more of them if he wanted. As to the Polish communiqué, I remarked that it was issued on the order and on behalf of the London Polish government. Bracken resumed trying to prove that Mikolajczyk wanted an agreement with the Soviet government, but in the Polish government there are representatives of different political parties with different points of view. I remarked that the issue is not the difference of the points of view, but a policy hostile to the Soviet Union, conducted by the followers of Pilsudski and Beck, who are the members of the London government. In a jovial tone Bracken got engaged with comparisons. He said that the Polish government resemble mischievous children, to whom it is sometimes difficult to explain the rules of decent behaviour[[9]](#footnote-9). I replied that adults bear responsibility for children’s behaviour and their pranks. Further Bracken said that the Polish government is similar to an orchestra in which musicians are coming from different orchestras and sometimes play bad music, I answered that in each orchestra there is a firm rule - if musicians play wrong music, the conductor expels them from the orchestra. Especially now, when we face a very critical period, it is impossible to let irresponsible people play the wrong music. Bracken then switched to a serious tone and said that Britain was conducting war together with Poland for over 4 years, and the agreement on the issue of Poland is necessary for the future cooperation between the USSR and Britain. I’ve said that the Soviet Union, having a common border with Poland, is interested in the issue of Poland affairs no less than the British government, and our position concerning the Polish government is absolutely clear. Bracken again reiterated several times what he had said at the beginning about Mikolajczyk’s trip for negotiations with Marshal Stalin and representatives of Liberation Committee. In the end Bracken added that if Mikolajczyk’s trip to Moscow had taken place and had he not wasted all the opportunities for achieving an agreement, then after that the British government would reconsider its position in regards to the Polish government. From the conversation with Bracken it was possible to understand that he knows about Comrade Stalin’s message to Churchill on the issue of Poland[[10]](#footnote-10). I asked Bracken about Mikolajczyk’s political attitude towards the USSR and why he does not wish to directly declare his attitude on a number of political issues awaiting a solution. Bracken answered that if Mikolajczyk had visited Moscow and as a result of negotiations had reached a satisfactory agreement, he could declare his position after such negotiations in Moscow.

[…] During our conversation Brendan Bracken made the issue of Poles the main point , in particular, Mikolajczyk’s trip to Moscow, and I had an impression that he was given special orders by Churchill or Eden to talk it over with me.

THE USSR AMBASSADOR IN GREAT BRITAIN [signature] (F. Gusev)

[FPARF, f. 069, inv. 28, fold. 86, file 11, pp. 56–59]

Keywords: Poland

1. Bracken, Brendan Rendall (1901 – 1958) – 1st Viscount Bracken, British statesman, Parliamentary Privat Secretary to the Prime Minister (1940-1941); Minister of Information (1941-1945); First Lord of the Admiralty (1945). On the top of the document, it is written: to Novikov, to Comrade Yerofeev. This is in reference to the head of the European II Department of the People's Commissariat of the USSR, K.V. Novikov, as well as Yerofeev, Vladimir Y. (1909 - 1986) - Soviet diplomat, deputy head of the II European Department of the People's Commissariat of the USSR (1942 - 1948), Head of the Latin American Countries Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1948 - 1949), advisor to the Soviet Embassy in the United Kingdom (1949 - 1952), and advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1952 - 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lyttelton, Oliver (1893 – 1972) – British statesman and politician, Minister of Production (1942 – 1945), President of the Board of Trade (1945), Secretary of State for the Colonies (1951 – 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Smollett, Harry Peter (1912 – 1980) – (born Smolka, Hans Peter) – British journalist and civil servant, head of the Russian section of the Ministry of Information during Second World War. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tree, Ronald (1897 – 1976) – British politician, Conservative MP (1933 – 1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In light of the progress of the Lublin-Brest operation and the liberation of Brest by Soviet forces on 28 July, a significant centre of resistance in Warsaw was formed in anticipation of Warsaw’s liberation taking place very soon. On 27 July the Supreme Command issued a directive: "After taking over the region between Brest and Siedlce, the right flank will press home an attack in the general direction of Warsaw, with the task of taking over Praga [a district of Warsaw] by no later than 5-8 August..." (Russkiy arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya. T. 14 (3-1). p. 201). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Such sentiments, which emerged in the summer of 1944 in light of the success of "Operation Overlord", were typical in some British and Americans circles. See: Memo by Donovan for President, 14/06/1944 // Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, President's Secretary File, SAFE files, OSS. Published in: Put’ k Velikoy Pobede. p. 602–604. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In late July – early August, a meeting with Mikołajczyk and a number of other representatives of the "London Poles" was held in Moscow. Mikołajczyk had a number of conversations with Stalin, Molotov, and representatives of the Polish Committee for National Liberation. Agreement on key issues - the Soviet-Polish border and the coalition government – could not be reached. See the documents in Russkiy arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya. T. 14 (3-1). S. 205–206; Sovetskiy faktor v Vostochnoy Evrope. T. 1. pp. 67–88. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The communiqué of 25 July was in fact a response to the formation of the pro-Soviet Polish Committee of National Liberation (PCNL) on 22 July. Officially, the body was established in the Soviet-liberated city of Chełm (Chairman - Edward Osóbka-Morawski), but the PCNL members were in fact in Moscow until 26 July after which they arrived to Lublin (hence their name in the West as the "Lublin Poles"). In their 25 July communiqué, The Polish Council in London characterized the PCNL as ‘usurpers’. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Churchill shared such perceptions, which had their roots in the conservative British elite’s national stereotyping of the Poles. As he wrote in mid-May 1943 to Eden, "we must not be too tender with these unwise people”. (Prime Minister to Foreign Secretary, s.d. // CHAR 20/128). Published in: Put’ k Velikoy Pobede. p. 394. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Response to Churchill’s message of 25 July, in which he reported about the Mikołajczyk-led Polish delegation’s imminent departure for Moscow. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)