

August 14, 1966

Note from the Conversation between Ambassador Jerzy Knothe and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai during the ambassador's farewell visit, August 14, 1966

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Summary:

Ambassador Jerzy Knothe and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai discuss ongoing Chinese class struggles.

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I am providing the most important elements from my conversation here (the part on general issues is not included):

Prime Minister Zhou: We are meeting at such a late time, because recently we had a plenum of the Central Committee after which there's still some work to be done. The period of your stay in our country, Comrade Ambassador, has been the period of the biggest changes in our country. We have been really busy during this time and during whatever meetings we had with you, we spoke relatively little.

Comrade Ambassador Knothe: Yeah, I remember some long conversations, Comrade Prime Minister.

Prime Minister: During the latest period, a new situation has evolved in China due to the cultural revolution. In the communique from the previous (Tenth) Plenum, it is stated that the center of our attention will be focused on the issue of the class struggle in our society. The current cultural revolution is the reflection of this. This revolution resolves the problem, that is, "who will defeat whom" in the ideological area. The struggle between the bourgeoisie ideology and the proletarian ideology is taking place right now. We are striving, in the process of this struggle, to eliminate the old ideology, old views, customs and habits, and to eliminate the old culture. At the same time, we desire to create new culture, new customs and habits, and we desire to establish the rule of the proletarian ideology.

As the result of the CC Plenum, we published two documents, which are well known to you: "The Resolution of the CC CCP on the issue of the great socialist cultural revolution" (Renmin Ribao, August 9) as well as "The Communiqué from the XI Plenum (Renmin Ribao, August 14).

Comrade Ambassador: It is still not clear to us, the outside observers, why this turn of events is taking place so violently and all of a sudden? After all, the class struggle is a long-term process, especially as far as the ideology is concerned.

Prime Minister: Two years ago, we began a socialist training campaign in the countryside. After some time, we moved this campaign into the city, first to the university environment, and subsequently to cultural institutions, offices, service industry, and so on. As the result of this training, some ideological conflicts have emerged and subsequently they intensified. The campaign of promoting the socialist upbringing grew into a revolution of superstructure [? - nadbudowa]. The believers in bourgeoisie ideology and the proponents of the capitalist road of [economic] development, who at times held high level positions within the party apparatus, showed their real face. These persons were unmasked as the rightist elements and were fished out. The struggle is deep and acute. In the cities - due to specific conditions and atmosphere - it is taking place at a fast speed and taking on different forms, which differ from those that are being carried out in the countryside. However, there is no difference in this struggles when it comes to their essence. A series of important editorial articles have been published regarding this issue for the past two months.

Comrade Ambassador: Yes, I have studied them.

Prime Minister: The Western press displays serious dissatisfaction with our current

revolution. They believe that we have closed a road to a peaceful transformation in China.

Comrade Ambassador: Comrade Prime Minister, will the current movement also include the economic spheres?

Prime Minister: The party and administrative apparatus will carry out criticism regarding the economic life. When it comes to specialists from the production area, then the ones who will fall under criticism will only be those who committed serious errors or represented the view which promoted a blind faith in foreign ways. Nevertheless, their criticism will take place differently than of those who represent arts and culture. This issue is reflected in point 12 of "the Resolution," which talks about the protection of scientists and engineers, given that these persons assume a patriotic attitude, will work actively, and will not go against the party, etc.

In addition, we treat the cultural revolution as a lever for further development of industrial production, whose revitalization has already taken place. When it comes to agriculture, the current year was predicted to experience droughts. This spring, drought took over the northern part of the country. Subsequently, it moved already to the Yangtze [region]. Currently, the drought has already been easing up. We can assume that this year's harvest will be at the level of the last year's one, and maybe even better. The final result will depend on the grain harvest this fall.

Please, Comrade Ambassador, relay greetings to Comrade Gomulka, Comrade Ochab, and Comrade Cyrankiewicz.

Remark: In light of Prime Minister's statement that there are still things to be taken care of after the Plenum, the information provided by the Deputy Director of the Protocol in the Chinese Foreign Ministry that the Chairman [Head of State] Liu Shaoqi was not able to receive Comrade Ambassador [Knothe] because he was currently outside of Beijing, is significant [and requires our attention].

Drafted by K. Burski