

January 11, 1957

**Notes from the Completed Discussions of 11 and 12
January 1957 between the Delegates of the Chinese
People's Republic and Poland (Excerpts)**

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Summary:

Gomulka describes the 1956 Polish protests and his confrontation with Soviet authorities.

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[...]

Secret [Handwritten]

NOTES

from the completed discussions of 11 and 12 January 1957 between the delegates of the Chinese People's Republic [ChPR] and Poland.

The Chinese side in the discussions included: Comrades Zhou Enlai, He Long, Wang Jiaxiang, and the ambassador of the ChPR in Poland, Wang Bingnan.

From the Polish side participants included: Comrades Gomulka, Cyrankiewicz, Zawadzki, Ochab, Zambrowski, Rapacki, [Stefan] Naszkowski, and Poland's ambassador to the Chinese People's Republic, [Stanislaw] Kiryluk.

First sitting on day 11.I.1957 at 1500 hrs.

[Comrade Gomulka]

[...]

Fundamentally correct resolutions had been accepted at our VII Plenum [of July 1956], but they remained unfulfilled because our leadership and many lower structures in the Party were paralyzed. The primary deficiency of the VII Plenum, however, was its inability to steer the Polish-Soviet relationship back to a position of equality and sovereignty. This deeply preyed on the country. Many comrades in the Party leadership came to the conclusion, in order to avoid a dangerous situation in the country, that it was time to regulate Polish-Soviet relations. This situation was well known to the CPSU leadership, but the Soviet comrades decided firmly at the time to oppose actively this tendency. The result was that on the day before the VIII Plenum opened, the Soviet embassy communicated to us that a delegation, which did in fact arrive, will present itself in Poland on the very day the Plenum opens. The Soviet comrades also turned to the then First Secretary, comrade Ochab, to comrade Cyrankiewicz, and to me, even though I was not a CC member at the time, to demand that we clearly state our views on his matter. With one voice we asked the Soviet comrades not to come and not to meet with us on the day the VIII Plenum opened; maybe later, on the next day, or even later, so that it would not make our work more difficult. Despite our position, the Soviet comrades told us through their ambassador that they will arrive on the day of the Plenum and that they expect Party and Government leaders to greet them at the airport. We understood this to be a dictate and a threat to us personally. Not wanting to aggravate this delicate situation, the whole PUWP Politburo decided to greet the CPSU delegation. And here came the incidents that weighed very heavily on the subsequent course of events and the work of the Plenum. The Soviet comrades, especially comrade Khrushchev, immediately caused a scene at the airport. There were many Soviet generals who served in the Polish Army, as well as Marshal Konev, at the airport. Khrushchev first greeted the Soviet generals and Marshal Rokossowski, completely ignoring members of the PUWP Politburo and the Government. Next, he approached the Polish delegation. He gestured his finger to comrade Ochab like a lout and began to threaten [in Russian]: "That number won't pass here." We accepted all of this very calmly. We did not want the Soviet generals and their chauffeurs to see any public display because we knew the harm that this could bring. The Soviet comrades, right there at the airport, demanded a postponement of the Plenum. This was exactly at the moment when every CC member waited for the Plenum to open. We asked the Soviet comrades if they would come to the Belvedere Palace, where we resumed the discussions.

Khrushchev's first words were as follows: "We have decided to intervene brutally in your affairs and we will not allow you to realize your plans." We immediately thought that if someone puts a revolver on the table we will not talk. We asked if they wanted to arrest us. Khrushchev explained that he did not say anything of the sort, only that the CPSU had decided to intervene. Since the comrades were waiting in the hall for the Plenum to begin, we explained that we cannot agree to postpone the Plenum, but after the official opening of the Plenum we will return to the talks with them. The Soviet comrades eventually agreed. After we opened the Plenum, and added certain members to the CC, we gave no indication about the atmosphere at the meeting, adding only that we are going to continue our talks with the Soviet comrades.

The subsequent talks were somewhat calmer. Comrade Mikoyan reported the perspective of the Soviet delegation. He said that the Soviet Union has certain military forces on GDR [German Democratic Republic] territory and is concerned that changes by us after the VIII Plenum might lead to a difficult situation, with a loss of communications to those military forces, especially if Poland wants to break away from the bloc uniting our states. We explained to the Soviet comrades that the changes would allow for the strengthening of our cooperation and not to its weakening (about which they were well informed; and that no one alive among us wants to break away). The Soviet comrades were threatening a brutal response because they concluded we should not make changes to the CC PUWP Politburo, except to include comrade Gomulka. The Soviet comrades pointed out that there are real communists in Poland, who take a correct position, and therefore we are obliged to support them. It was an attempt to split the Party leadership into groups.

At this time, we received reports that the Soviet army stationed in Poland began to march on Warsaw. As to our question about what this means, the Soviet comrades explained that it was part of some military exercise planned a long time ago. We explained to the Soviet comrades that, notwithstanding the facts, in the eyes of Polish society this military exercise will be understood as an attempt to put pressure on the Government and Party. We demanded the return of the Soviet armored units to their bases. The Soviet comrades told Marshal Rokossowski, who was taking part in the discussions, to transmit to Marshal Konev the wishes of the PUWP Politburo, to halt the military exercises, which of course did not happen. Smaller units of the Polish armed forces were also moved in the direction of Warsaw, on the orders of Marshal Rokossowski, who, when asked, admitted: "I wanted to secure selected positions in Warsaw." Of course, Rokossowski did not inform the PUWP Politburo about his orders, merely confirming, after we asked about it, that he had given the orders.

The talks with the Soviet delegation went on for the whole day. The atmosphere was very unpleasant, inhospitable. Our side was calm but determined. Near the end of the talks, now calmly, comrade Khrushchev explained: "It doesn't matter what you want, our view is such that we will have to restart the intervention." We again assured the Soviet comrades that their fears concerning Poland's departure from the bloc of socialist states was groundless. We will respect the wishes of the Party and we will build socialism according to our will.

We were given further information concerning the continued advance of the Soviet army in the direction of Warsaw; Soviet tanks ran over a number of people. Soviet warships also entered our territorial waters. Again, we tried to intervene, but the Soviet comrades did not listen.

On the next day, the Soviet delegation flew back to Moscow. This time, the farewell at the airport was more normal. The news of the Soviet delegation's visit to Poland, including the incident at the airport, spread throughout Warsaw with the speed of light. It was said that the Soviet comrades argued with our Politburo. This raised the level of tensions in an already tense atmosphere. Rumors also spread, even before the Soviet delegation had arrived, that there were plans to seize the state. Workers at their enterprises were mobilized and put on a state of readiness by the Warsaw

Provincial Party Committee. Rumors spread to the effect that Rokossowski's army was planning, together with the Soviet army, to fight the Internal Security Corps, etc. The above examples weighed heavily on the subsequent resolution of the situation in the Party and in Poland. The PUWP Politburo decided to inform the Plenum about the better half of the results of the talks with the Soviet delegation. We put the whole affair this way: the Soviet comrades were very concerned to ensure that their communications with their army in the GDR were not damaged. The Politburo was able to convince the Soviet comrades that nothing will stand in the way of their cooperation with us and the GDR. In response to the many questions put to us by workers at different enterprises, we tried to justify the trip made by the Soviet comrades, we tried to defend their position, and we will continue to keep secret our talks. Shortly after this came the first incidents from Hungary, which added to the causes of our internal difficulties.

[...]

Comrade Zhou Enlai thanks comrade Gomulka for his extensive information about the situation in Poland. It appears that the position taken by the PUWP during the October events was correct. Its correctness is based on the fact that the Polish comrades resorted to Marxist-Leninist principles in their work. The Communist Party of China [CPCh] supported the decision of the Polish Party from the beginning, when the VIII Plenum made its decision. The main decision was taken by the Polish comrades. The CPCh simply played a stabilizing role. The relations between fraternal parties, Zhou Enlai said, ought to be based on Marxism-Leninism. Relations between socialist countries ought to be based on equal rights.

The Soviet Union, in its declaration of 30 October [1956], recognized that cooperation must be based on equality. The CPCh supported this position and we have always tried to work in support of it. As Marxists we ought to know how to learn from mistakes. In the Polish-Soviet relationship in the past there was a lot of inequality. Now this has been corrected. We are of the opinion that the PUWP should avoid public discussion of the situation which transpired with the CPSU because it could damage our camp. It is also correct that the PUWP did not ignite nationalist sentiments. Your tactics allowed for the regulation of difficult problems without a public discussion, of which the imperialists could have taken advantage. In our declaration of 29 December [1956] we underlined that antagonistic and non-antagonistic disputes should be resolved by various methods. I support the position of comrade Gomulka, Zhou Enlai said, about equality and sovereignty, but the leading role of the Soviet Union must be remembered. The leading role of the Soviet Union is the main point, while equality and errors are points of less value. Comrade Mao Zedong in his talks with comrade Kiryluk correctly underlined that relations between our countries ought to be like relations between brothers, and not like the relations between a father and a son, like the past the relations between the USSR and Poland. For our part, we told the CPSU that their position regarding the relations with fraternal parties is not always correct. But we do not believe this ought to be spoken of in public, so we do not weaken the USSR. It is not necessary to return to the errors. The main point at this time is the leading role of the CPSU and to unite again against our enemies.

[...]

Warsaw, 16.I.1957

Protocols by: Kiryluk St., Krazarz K.

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