

October 19, 1956

Aleksander Zawadzki's Notes from the 19-20 October Polish-Soviet Talks

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Summary:

The Soviet-Polish talks at the Belve-dere Palace began at about 11 a.m. on October 19 and ended at 3 a.m. on October 20. The talks included Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov, and Kaganovich on the Soviet side, and Gomulka, with fourteen members of the PUWP Politburo, on the Polish side. Zawadzki made detailed notes and endeavored to include comments made by a wider range of participants on both sides.

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Aleksander Zawadzki's Notes

Meeting with Comrades Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov, Kaganovich on 19 X 56.

□ Comrade Mikoyan [says] that the [PUWP] Politburo has shown itself to be inhospitable in [its] dealings with the Soviet side. Standing issues include relations between the parties, about the boundaries of the [socialist] camp, and issues between our states.

□

Our countries are allies, against [whom]? NATO. From our [PUWP] Party they [Soviets] do not have the real information. Ochab says that the situation is complicated, but he does not say what the problem is. American Radio is providing details about the situation in the [PUWP] Party leadership-(Mikoyan reads [apparently from American radio reports]). What can separate us? 1) Economic issues. We [Soviets] need nothing from Poland. The Polish side is also unilaterally presenting [the arguments of] the Soviet side without the facts-[such as the] issue of coal quotas. From 1959, they [Soviets] are ending their orders for coal from Poland to the USSR. Issue of uranium mining-as of Spring we [Poles] have not responded. The Soviet Union experienced [economic] losses no smaller than Poland. The Soviet Union passed on to Poland major military secrets, which included a lot of expenditures on education, and so on. [All] for the taking. He [Mikoyan] cites Comrade Gomulka's letter to Stalin from 1948. About the excess amount of Jews in high positions, [and] that national nihilism characterizes some Jewish comrades. That he [Mikoyan] considers it correct to decrease the congestion [of Jews in the PUWP]. [Mikoyan adds] That now he [Gomulka] will be pulled to the top by the Jews and then again they will drop him. He [Mikoyan] cites an article by Gomulka from September 1948 on the matter of the Polish-Soviet alliance. Are we [Poles] holding to that [correct] line? No. Today anyone can write anything they want about the Soviet Union. Even in capitalist countries the government finds a way to ensure that the press does not offend a friendly state. Today, the Poles are starting what the Yugoslavs have finished. About the unrestricted [Polish press] campaign against the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union does not deprive Poland of its sovereignty. Maybe the Warsaw defense pact is unnecessary? Then we [Poles] should discuss this matter.

□ Issue of the abrupt removal of a group of comrades from the [PUWP] Politburo, who are seen in the eyes of the [Polish] nation as supporters of the friendship with the Soviet Union. The issue of Comrade Rokossowski-[is a] major political issue.

□ [For the Soviets] There remain only some minor unresolved differences with Tito. With the Chinese, we [Soviets] have complete understanding on every issue. Comrade Ochab said that at this [Eighth] Plenum, Comrades Morawski and Matwin will be removed [from the PUWP Secretariat], but now they are being put forward [to join the leadership]. (Ochab interrupted and said that he too is being removed [from the post of First Secretary]). The NATO camp wants us [Poles] to argue with the Soviet Union, [to] divide [us]. Tell us [Soviets], where are the differences between us-what do you [Poles] want[?]

□2) Comrade Ochab-that he believes Comrades Morawski and Matwin are good, etc. and is for keeping them [Zawadzki leaves space here, possibly to add something later].

□3) Comrade Gomulka-He said to himself that he would never return to Party work. Now he sees that he must. The issue of [Poland's continued] friendship [with the Soviet Union] is [also] the opinion of the entire [PUWP] collective [leadership]. [But] that which now exists in the [PUWP] Politburo cannot continue. The [old] Politburo was not in the position to take control of the situation [in Poland]. The resolutions of the Seventh Plenum [of July 1956] were in fact correct - [but] a section of the Politburo membership understands it differently. [Especially] The issue of

democratization. Some [PUWP] comrades took the position to just wait [and do nothing].

□He [Gomulka] believes that a Politburo composed of 9 persons will be sufficient. But, even with this new composition [it may not be enough]-Comrade Ochab represents opinion calling for harsh measures against the [Polish] press and this [too] will not help... The root of the problem [is] in the material condition of the working class, but there are other [causes as well]. As to Comrade Molotov's question [apparently about the attacks on Stalin in Poland], he [Gomulka] replies: and "you too"-[reminding Molotov of] Khrushchev's [secret] report [to the Twentieth CPSU Congress] on Stalin. [On] the issue of coal [Gomulka says]-there are many questions and we [the Poles] have not answered them all. Other matters [include]: irregularities in the [Polish] organs of security. Many innocent people were arrested, tormented. The issue of [Soviet] advisers attached to the [Polish] security [apparatus] and their recall [to the Soviet Union]. The issue of the [Soviet] Advisers and their responsibility [while in Poland]. And, that Zawadzki told me [Gomulka]: how can we [Poles] make them [Soviet advisers] accept responsibility [for their actions]. I [Zawadzki] had apparently told this to Comrade Gomulka this [past] May. That the Soviet comrades should not fear that [our] planned changes would weaken the friendship [between the Soviet Union and Poland]... In their reply to the Soviet comrades, the Yugoslav comrades were right, in 1948, in answering to the letter by Stalin and Molotov, that they knew their [own] people well, and that experience has shown that they had, and they continue to have today, the support of the [Yugoslav] nation. In a letter they [Yugoslavs] stated... [again Zawadzki leaves some space]

□4) Comrade Zambrowski. That the Soviet comrades have introduced discord among us in the Politburo.

□5) Zawadzki (attached points). [It is not clear what he means here]

□6) Comrade Jozwiak-Here [in Poland] one can feel [the presence of] an enemy, who acts cunningly and [is] deeply [rooted]. That there is no one in the Politburo who is opposed to democracy. But that hostile elements are active [in the Party]. He agrees that our leadership was not leadership at all. The issue of Soviet officers-he [Jozwiak] told the First Secretary [Ochab] why we want to send them [Soviet officers] back. That at a Politburo meeting four comrades, O[chab], G[omulka], Z[awadzki], C[yrankiewicz], were asked [to select the new Politburo], they proposed the obvious Politburo members. He [Jozwiak] was opposed [to the new Politburo], and so was one more comrade. He mostly means Comrade Rokossowski.

□7) Comrade Zenon Nowak-The nature of the situation-it is about a struggle for power [inside the PUWP]. The work [of those engaged in the struggle] went along the lines of a critique, to smear everything and everyone [opposed to them]. We excluded one person from the Party and there was uproar. The mood in the country [Poland] is being organized. About the list with the composition of the new [PUWP] Politburo-it was made public without the Politburo's decision (Ochab explains that he gave permission...). He [Nowak] does not think that the new list of Politburo members will solve the situation.

□8) Comrade Cyrankiewicz-He declares his position toward the USSR. -To remove everything that adversely impacts the issue of [the Soviet-Polish] friendship. -That the greeting today at the airport is contradictory to everything that was settled at the July [1955] Plenum of the CPSU about the mutual relations between our countries. That we have to deal with the issue of strengthening the Party and the leadership. [Cyrankiewicz is] Against Comrade Rokossowski, for banging his fist on the table. -(Comrade Khrushchev: where are you headed with this? You are either naive, or you pretend to be...). At this point, 9:00 [p.m.], Comrade Gomulka vehemently protests against the movement of Soviet and Polish tanks-[which brings about] sharp clashes

with the Soviet comrades. Comrade Khrushchev-that in Germany [there is] a huge Soviet army... Comrade Mikoyan-go ahead, do it, but you will assume a great responsibility in front of the Party, the nation and the brother countries! (directed at Gomulka). Again, about the list of new Politburo [members]...[and its] distribution in Warsaw.

□9) Comrade Khrushchev. 1) regarding the [Soviet] advisers-that rather reluctantly they will give it to us [Soviets will concede]. That he [Khrushchev] feels pained by the position of Comrade Gomulka on the issue of the advisers. That the Soviet Union saw it as its duty [to send advisers to Poland]. He [Khrushchev] admits that they [Soviets] travelled here with the purpose of telling us their views, interpretations, and to influence us... But we [the Poles] will not entertain anything. Very determined concerning the issue of Comrade Rokossowski. [Soviets concerned] That this is how Gomulka has come [to join] the leadership of the [Polish] Party, with such a position.

□10) Comrade Molotov, that we [the Poles] of course have to take responsibility [for our problems], but that they [the Soviets] have to take responsibility for the larger issue of the [socialist] camp.

□11) Rokossowski, what kind of circumstances do I find myself in.

□12) Comrade Ochab. There are social forces, which are active...That all the comrades in the Politburo are good. [It's] just that we [in the Polish Party] did not want to hinder Comrade Gomulka [in his role] as the First Secretary.

□Rejoinder by Soviet comrades, that the [PUWP] Politburo should not remove itself from the desires of the First Secretary.