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Cable from the Chinese Embassy in Germany, 'Brief of a Conversation with the Polish Ambassador'

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Summary:

Feliks Baranowski and Wang Guoquan discuss the Sino-Soviet split and China's relations with Poland.

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[...]

Brief of a Conversation with the Polish Ambassador

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

On the 20th of this month I invited the Polish ambassador to Germany [Feliks] Baranowski and his wife to my house as guests. From our conversation I can see that Baranowski's views are revisionist, but with a slight centrist lean. His attitude toward me was still friendly, however. He was very perturbed by the issue of divergence; therefore we mainly exchanged our views on this topic. The brief of our conversation is roughly as follows:

Baranowski desperately wishes for public quarreling to end. "Due to public quarreling about divergence," he believes, "the socialist infantry has arrived at the weakest point in history. The open polemics should be brought to an end no matter what. The socialist infantry cannot be weakened any further. We must not allow it to disperse!"

"Your concerns and worries about divergence are completely understandable," I said. "We have never agreed to publicize divergence. But the Soviet leadership would settle for nothing but a public quarrel, which is what has resulted in the present circumstances. Now they have propagated so many poisonous and erroneous opinions, proceeding wildly toward being anti-Chinese. How could we keep silent? If we do not speak up, it will not only be disadvantageous to our party, but will be especially disadvantageous for the worldwide revolution. The influence would be horrendous."

"At this point," Baranowski said, "we must let bygones be bygones. Who started this is no longer the most important thing. At present, what's important is stopping the polemics. What needs to be written has all been written already, there will not be any new developments. The opinions of both sides are already known to all."

"We have always emphasized the elimination of divergence and the strengthening of harmony," I said. "But this is both sides' private business, only honesty will be accepted. Lately, they have still spoken of stopping open polemics on the one hand, while on the other hand remaining robustly anti-Chinese and anti-Marxist-Leninist. And in fact Si [sic] has certainly never stopped openly discussing military action. Since the publication of the Soviet Central Committee's open letter, the Soviet Union has already published over 2,000 anti-Chinese documents (including reprints), and here they have written 160 or 170 (not including reprints). Under these circumstances, how could we stop from rebutting? The responsibility for us not stopping is absolutely not in our hands. They have written over 2,000, while we only have five, and they're the ones who can't take it anymore. There is plenty more talk and ideas where that came from, too."

"The amount is not great on your side," Baranowski replied, "but each one is a thick, thick volume. The recent one stands out for being written so sharply. The Soviet documents are quite a bit warmer."

"That depends on how you see it," I said. "If we're talking about labeling people without pretense, they have already given us more than our share of unwarranted labels. Our documents 'seek truth from facts, grasp reality, and reason well.' Maybe that is why they are perhaps a bit sharper. But the other side is all barbaric and illogical. All the 'facts' they claim are either crooked or else fabricated. Naturally, they cannot possibly have much power to persuade. And as far as the amount is concerned, what they have written greatly surpasses our output."

"You must watch your tone during these discussions," Baranowski said, "particularly within the Worker's Movement. I read a report in West Germany's Die Welt newspaper about a recent document of yours (the Fifth Criticism of the Soviet Communist Party [published 19 November 1963 in Renmin ribao and Hongqi]). In the document, you all equate Khrushchev with a 'buffoon'. This kind of tone is inappropriate for referring to a politician."

"Everything we say is fact," I replied. "Whatever the facts are, that is what we say. A lot of what is written was said by Khrushchev, many of the actions were committed by Khrushchev. Of course we have to criticize him. Faced with such serious ideological errors within the Marxist-Leninist movement, how can a serious Marxist-Leninist party not take up a serious attitude in referring to them? Is it possible to be liberalists and refuse to struggle?"

"Every politician makes mistakes," Baranowski said. "This is evidenced throughout history. Khrushchev is a political leader; that is a reality. The Soviet Union is a socialist state; Khrushchev has assumed leadership in that environment and represents that environment; that too is a reality. To say Khrushchev has broken with the party leadership or the populace, this is not nor cannot be a reality."

"Whatever the case may be," I replied, "those are his words, this is the situation he has caused, and we must struggle with him. If we do not criticize mistaken ideology, this will bring great losses to the international communist movement and abort the worldwide revolution. You all understand the facts of history quite clearly. Khrushchev attacked Stalin, saying that Stalin committed unforgivable errors. But Stalin never incurred such losses for the worldwide revolution, and Khrushchev has indeed brought the communist movement to such a low point that it is on the brink of dispersal. This is why many people criticize him, and he goes on with his savagery. If we just went along with what he said, following his deeds in locked step, who knows to what depths the movement's efforts would fall! If we do not criticize him today, many things would continue to evolve, such as the Hungary and Poland situation, the Albania situation, China's situation, and so on. How many times have we as a party repeatedly investigated before finally being pulled into the struggle with Khrushchev over his erroneous road. Before divergence was made public, our party had many ideological struggles with him, all without ever achieving results. Later, he made divergence a public matter, such that we had no choice but to begin a public struggle with him. We have to uphold Marxist-Leninism, we have to uphold revolution, and it is imperative for us to struggle with Khrushchev."

"The facts of history are all clear," Baranowski said. "The issue at hand is eliminating divergence and finding a path to harmony. In this regard, China and the Soviet Union share a special responsibility as brothers. Otherwise imperialism will inevitably benefit. You must watch your tone during discussions. You cannot be too sharp, as when you say that by signing the test ban treaty the Soviet Union has turned its back on the interests of all the nations' peoples. Other brother nations also signed it, does that mean that they have turned their backs on the interests of all the nations' peoples as well?"

"You wish to eliminate divergence and find a path to harmony," I said. "This is a worthwhile desire. I empathize with this wish of yours. We have also had this wish since the beginning. But it is not enough for us to merely wish this in order to bring it about. Even based on innumerable facts and learning, it is so hard to get the opposite side to trust us. They say that their desire to end open polemics is sincere? We have always made our speeches based on true facts: the partial test ban treaty is a treaty that turns its back to the people's benefit. Aside from its function of deceiving the people, it does not have any positive aspects for the people, and in fact behind its veneer it is concealing an enormous conspiracy, one that is disadvantageous for the worldwide revolution. One has to consider the essence of the problem. With its signing of the test ban treaty, the Soviet leadership has simply turned its back on the

interests of its people and the people of all nations. When we speak of a conspiracy, we are talking about the United States, England and the Soviet Union.”

“Even our comrades in Cuba do not completely agree with your ideas,” Baranowski replied. “A few individuals even say that by not signing the partial test ban treaty, it is you who have turned your back on the global struggle to obtain peace.”

“This situation of which you speak does not conform to facts,” I said. “Cuba to this day has also not signed the test ban treaty. In fact, the ones who are turning their backs on the interests of the people are not us, but those people who are using the treaty to dupe the peoples of the world. History is the best witness, in the end it will compose the epilogue.”

“You say,” Baranowski said, “that ideological divergence does not permeate into international relations. But trade between Poland and China has declined by half these past several years. This decline is not due to any error of ours.”

“We do not want to reduce trade either,” I said. “However, due to Chinese agriculture’s three years of disaster and the Soviet Union’s complete withdrawal of China-based experts, innumerable connections have been severed, which has brought our industrial production an extreme amount of difficulty. We were unfortunately constrained to make adjustments. We do not have goods to exchange with you, thus that manner of trade necessarily declined; this is completely natural. In point of fact, the decline in trade with you has been comparatively minor. As economic conditions take a turn for the better, trade could conceivably make a gradual recovery.”

“You understand that our party is aligned with the Soviet Communist Party on strategic and policy issues,” Baranowski said. “But when we write documents, we do not adopt the stance of discussing military action. We clarify our points of view head-on.”

“According to my knowledge,” I said, “despite the existence of divergence between us, your party is relatively cool and calm toward the issue of divergence. Relations between us are quite positive.”

Judging from the complete discussion, Baranowski is very interested in the issue of divergence. Our conversation went on deep into the night. Despite Baranowski’s views inclining toward the right, his attitude was quite good. In our discussion he supported Khrushchev’s perspective, but espoused different views in terms of conduct. He admitted that Khrushchev had made some mistakes, and even intimated his hopes that the CCP would give Khrushchev an opportunity to correct his mistakes. He even said that signing this treaty did mean turning one’s back to the interests of the people of the world. He had a great many ideas and hoped for an improvement in trade relations. Overall, Baranowski treated me as a friend, and we should continue to strengthen our work.

Wang Guoquan
27 November 1963

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