

October 19, 1956 Gomulka's Notes from the 19-20 October Polish-Soviet Talks

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Summary:

Gomulka's private notes from the Soviet-Russian confrontation at Belvedere Palace.

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Original Language:

Polish

Contents:

- English Translation

Wladyslaw Gomulka's Notes^[1]

1/ Ochab opens the meeting—[then] Gomulka—[then] Mikoyan [outlines Soviet concerns]. [Mikoyan speaks:] [Poland is a] neighbouring country—[there is] a tradition of meetings, [and Soviets are sensitive about the] international situation. Our [Polish] tone in rejecting a reception for the Soviet delegation. Sounded a great alarm for them. Alliance between states is a matter for their [Soviet] concern, Warsaw Pact—NATO Pact. On what do they [Soviets] base the difficulty of our situation, they're not exactly sure. Ochab did not inform them about the situation in Poland. American radio: he [Mikoyan] cites [apparently from American news reports].^[2] Well then [Mikoyan adds]: are these reports true [and] are there objective issues which could divide us?

Economic discussion. From Poland they need nothing. [On the] question of coal reparations. They [Soviets] agreed to decrease the quota of coal [from Poland]. From 1959, [they will] not take Polish coal for their commodities. Letter from [Otto] Grotewohl^[3] regarding the quota of coal. Spring economic conference [in Soviet Union]—resolutions [were] not kept. They [Soviets] will not have enough ore and cotton for Poland.

Iron ore works in Poland.^[4] They decided to deliver it to Poland, no reply as yet [from the Poles]. Factory—credits of 2,200 million rubles for the investment. They will deliver all their secret wartime production [methods], patents, licenses. [And] Brand new airplanes with Soviet licenses.^[5]

They could come to an arrangement so that we did not have to supply ships. They would be satisfied. [On the Polish] Army—Soviet officers made it [a] high calibre [force]. [On the Polish] Press, [concerning] what it wrote about Khrushchev's meeting [with the PUWP Central Committee in March 1956]—Jewish matter.^[6] Their [Soviet] appointments in the Republics. Cites my [Gomulka's] letter to Stalin.^[7] What do they [Soviets] want—friendship.

1/ war—dangerous,

2/ to isolate Polish reactionaries,

3/ we belong to a common socialist camp—no one would forgive us if we broke apart.

[There is a] Wide-spread threat to the [Polish] government. [Stanislaw] Mikolajczyk.^[8] We [Poles] do not appreciate the dangerousness of the situation. Reading from my [Gomulka's] article of 1948 [on Soviet-Polish unity].⁴⁶ Will a wedge not be forced between Poland and the Soviet Union today? Do we support this [wedge] in our [current] position? Why do we tolerate anti-Soviet propaganda [in Poland]?

In Yugoslavia there are no voices in the press against Soviet Union. [The] Voices from our press [read:]—Stalinism is fascism. Let the dogs bark.

What frightens them [Soviets]? It's not [about] insults, as much as the threat of us [Poles] losing power. The article by [Jerszy] Putrament^[9] [for example] about the amoral position of the USSR.^[10] The Poles are beginning what the Yugoslavs have repudiated. They [Soviets] have anxiety for these reasons. The slogan of the youth: away with Rokossowski, is a blow against the army. How are we to reconcile [Soviet-Polish] friendship with the demand to recall officers, Soviet officers[?] They can't be thrown out all of the sudden. Do Soviet officers imperil [Polish] sovereignty? If you consider the Warsaw Pact unnecessary—tell us. Anti-Soviet propaganda does not meet any resistance [in Poland].

People who are guilty of nothing continue to be removed from the [PUWP] leadership—how [are the Soviets] to understand this? Does this not mean that it [changes in the PUWP Politburo] is leveled against the Polish-Soviet friendship[?] How will the removal of Rokossowski be understood by the [Polish] nation, how will this be interpreted abroad? Everyone will understand it as a blow to the alliance.

Is what Comrade Gomulka says, true, or is it just words? I [Gomulka] am returning to work under an anti-Soviet slogan. They [Soviets] do not criticize us—[Jerzy] Morawski, [Wladyslaw] Matwin [are main targets].^[11] [For the Soviets] The question is not about people, but what kind of politics is hiding [behind the proposed] personnel changes. The atmosphere [in Poland] is anti-Soviet and the organizational decisions are anti-Soviet. Poland is not a Bulgaria or Hungary—together with us [USSR] it's the most important [country in the region]. In what way does the Soviet Union infringe on [Poland's] sovereignty?

In Khrushchev's discussions [with] Tito about the satellites [of Eastern Europe]—Tito banned the [Yugoslav] press from writing on the People's Democracies as [if they were] satellites. Without us [Poland] it is not possible to organize a defense against imperialism.

[1]. The commentaries in the text and the notes are mine. The original document was made available by Gomulka's son, Ryszard Strzelecki-Gomulka, and belongs to the family.

[2]. On the role of Radio Free Europe and the foreign correspondents in Warsaw who reported on the October events to the West see Jan Nowak-Jezioranski, *Wojna w Eterze [War on the Air]*, Tom 1 [Vol. 1] (London: Odnova [Restoration], 1986), ch. 15.

[3]. 1949-1964 President of the German Democratic Republic.

[4]. Gomulka is not clear, but he is probably referring to the Soviet offer to help build a factory in Poland to enrich uranium ore. See "Notatka z rozmowy polsko-radzieckich z 22 pazdziernika 1956 r w sprawie eksploatacji rudy uranowej — i Zalaczniki," AAN, KC PZPR paczka 112, tom 26, str. 643-661.

[5]. See [in Russian] "Pismo N. Chruszczowa do Wl. Gomulki z 13 kwietnia 1957 r. Dot. Uzbrojenia Wojsa Polskiego i produkcji nowoczesnej broni w Polsce oraz naruszenia tajemnej produkcji broni w Polsce," AAN, KC PZPR, paczka 112, tom 26, str. 223-225.

[6]. This is a reference to articles by Leszek Kolakowski, "Antysemita—Piec tez nienowych I przestroga [Anti-Semitism—Five old theses and admonition]," *Po Prostu [Plain Speaking]*, 22 (27 May 1956), and especially Edda Werfel (her husband, Roman Werfel, was editor-in-chief of *Nowe Drogi [New Paths]* from 1952 to 1959, the leading organ of the PUWP Central Committee; he was also editor of *Trybuna Ludu [People's Tribune]* for two months in March 1956), "Skad i dlaczego nastroje antyinteligencjki [From where and why the anti-intellectual mood?]" *Po Prostu*, 25 (17 June 1956). Edda Werfel attacked the call in the PUWP, supported by Khrushchev at the Sixth Plenum of March 1956, to "promote new [read: Polish] cadres" at the expense of Jews.

[7]. Gomulka's letter to Stalin was written on 14 December 1948, after his December 9 meeting with Stalin, Molotov and Beria. The letter was recently published in Poland. See "Ostatni spór Gomulki ze Stalinem [Gomulka's last dispute with Stalin]," ed. by Andrzej Werblan, *Dzis*, 6 (1993).

[8]. Reference to the "threat" posed by the former premier of the Polish government in London during the war. In 1945 he signed a pact with the communist government in Poland, resulting in the Provisional Government of National Unity. Faced with arrest after the rigged elections of 1947, he escaped to the West.

[9]. See Gomulka, "Na fundamentach jednosci stanie gmach socjalizmu" [On the foundations of unity stands the structure of socialism], *Glos Ludu [The People's Voice]* 328 (28 November 1948).

[10]. Writer and editor, prominent advocate of socialist realism in literature. 1945-50 Polish ambassador to Paris. In 1956 he was a member of the PUWP Central Committee and Secretary of the Party organization at the Polish Union of Writers. During the Sixth Plenum of March 1956 he made a passionate appeal against anti-Semitism.

48. Putrament wrote in Warsaw's largest daily, "Sedno sparwy" [The essence of the matter], *Zycie Warszawy [Warsaw Life]* (19 October 1956), that "the decisive, nodical problem for People's Poland" concerns the future of the self-governing workers' councils: "all those who will not agree in Poland either to counter-revolution, nor to a return to an 'exceptional state' [Stalinism], must know: socialism in Poland will be founded either by the working class or not at all." In *Pravda*, on October 20, the Soviet correspondent in Warsaw wrote, under the title "Anti-socialist performances in the columns of the Polish press," the following: "Over the last few days in the Polish press an ever increasing number of articles have been published which sound off about the repudiation of the road to socialism." Putrament's article is one of the two mentioned in the *Pravda* piece.

[] At the PUWP Secretariat meeting of 21 March 1956, Ochab took control of the Organization department and the central Party *aktiv*. Mazur retained control of the territorial *apparat*. Matwin acquired the Party's youth organization. Control of the industrial sector was transferred to Gierek. The departments of Education, Party History, and Social Services went to Albrecht, including responsibility for *Nowe Drogi*, *Trybuna Ludu*, and the Party commission which supervised the *Sejm* (Parliament). Morawski was to oversee the departments of Propaganda, Press and Radio, and Culture and Science. He also gained control of the All-Polish Committee of the National Unity Front, the Party commission responsible for education, and the editorial board of *Zycia Partii* [*Party Life*]. Matwin, Morawski and Albrecht—the so-called “Young Secretaries”—thus acquired the daily management of Party propaganda, ideology, culture, education, and the youth-wing of the Party. “Protokół z posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC w dn. 21 III 1956 r., nr. 96,” AAN, KC PZPR, paczka 15, tom 58, str. 50-51.