

August 15, 1948

Boleslaw Bierut's Notes to a Conversation with Josef Stalin on approximately 15 August 1948

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Summary:

Bierut and Stalin discuss plans for post-war Poland. Topics include the position of right-leaning groups in Poland and relationships with other Communist countries.

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Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

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I. 1) with the recommendation of the Politburo in full composition with the exception of Wieslaw.

2) Within the last two months there have taken place in the party important events, of which we were partly informing Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov and com. Zhdanov^[1]. The essence of these events comes down to revealing a rightist-nationalistic deviation in the party. The seriousness of this deviation is defined by:

1) it's headed by secretary general of the party, for whom within the last 4 years we have created great popularity and authority in the party.

2) it coincides with a crisis in the Yugoslav communist party, it gains international attention; this to a degree constrains our party in the sense that until now we have been avoiding an open fight against this deviation.

An important positive factor is that Wieslaw's attempts to transmit his false views and doubts to the party have been met with a deserved and decisive rebuttal not only from the party leadership, but also from the broad party active, so that a small group in the party headed by Wieslaw has been isolated and apparently attempts to proceed to the tactics of disguised fractional activities.

A complicating factor is that the party is on the eve of uniting with the PPS, as a result of which half a million members will pour into the party, the majority of which has been brought up in the spirit of opportunistic and nationalistic tendencies, which, of course, makes the rightist-nationalistic danger in the party more real.

3) A short outline of our party's crisis:

a) Already a year ago during the first meeting of the 9 parties and creation of the Information Bureau com. Wieslaw had revealed himself and under his pressure the whole Polish delegation, serious vacillations with regard to communist internationalism. He had sort of wanted to fence off Poland from the consequences of struggle against imperialism; he was just frightened not to have A Comintern rebuilt [the last 11 words in the original deleted - A.K.]. The delegation had been unable to assimilate fully an appraisal of the international and political situation presented in com. Zhdanov's report and take into consideration the tasks resulting from this assessment for all communist parties. However, all comrades from the leadership of our party, with the exception of Wieslaw, understood very fast the falsehood of their position at the first meeting of the Information Bureau and made self-criticism. Com. Wieslaw is still evading such self-criticism and remains silent.

b) To the first letter of the CC VKP(b) to the CC of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia com. Wieslaw had reacted with unfounded mistrust even before a discussion of this letter at the Politburo meeting, questioning the righteousness of assessment of the behavior of the Yugoslav communist party leadership, as presented in the letter. True - all Politburo members have received with amazement such deep political crisis in the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party, since previously they had appraised with excessive optimism the ideological position of the YCP, and in particular with regard to the principle of revolutionary internationalism and toward the Soviet Union. However, nobody of us had doubts in the correctness of facts, which had been considered by the CC VKP(b), and verified by signatures of comrades Molotov and Stalin.

Com. Wieslaw's doubts on the Yugoslav question have forced the Politburo not to include the secretary general of the party to a delegation to the Information Bureau to discuss the Yugoslav question, while he himself has received with satisfaction the fact of his exclusion.

c) For the June plenary meeting of the CC PPR, called in to discuss ideological foundations of unifying the two parties, com. Wieslaw had been preparing a report till the last minute and in contradiction with the usually accepted method of discussing it earlier at a Politburo meeting, com. Wieslaw, allegedly for lack of time - came up with the report directly to the CC. It turned out that com. Wieslaw had consciously calculated that the Politburo would not accept the content of his report, but that his personal reputation and influence would ensure acceptance of his report by the expanded CC plenum, in which over 100 people participated[2].

In com. Wieslaw's report there were many openly anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist theses. Dealing with the problem which of the traditions of the Polish revolutionary workers movement should be an ideological record for strengthening the foundations of a new Marxist-Leninist united party, com. Wieslaw thought that the most important of those achievements had been a struggle for independence of the Polish state in the period of tsarist oppression. Detaching the struggle for independence from the specific international situation and from the specific stages of development of revolutionary struggle of the working class - com. Wieslaw came up with an isolated negative assessment of the SDKPiL and KPP position and with a positive assessment of the PPS position on this question. PPS had revealed more political realism in the struggle for Poland's independence than the SDKPiL, which had suffered of Luxemburgism, and than the KPP, which had suffered of sectarianism - this is the basic thesis of com. Wieslaw. Distorting the Leninist thesis on the right of nations to self-determination up to separation, com. Wieslaw argues that in Poland's conditions this slogan had always come down to the struggle for Poland's independence - in contradiction to clear and comprehensive pronouncement of Lenin on this question. The whole report of com. Wieslaw had been severed from the specific struggle of the two basic streams in revolutionary struggle of the Polish proletariat, which had been conducted in the course of sixty years and has in fact taken position of justifying an opportunistic and bourgeoisnationalistic trend in the PPS.

Contrary to com. Wieslaw's calculations the CC plenum not only didn't approve his report, but all speaking comrades, with the exception of one[3], took a critical position. This report has done a tremendous harm to the party, whose ideological coherence has not been questioned up to now and had a decisive influence on the whole political life of the country.

The Politburo attempted to convince com. Wieslaw of falsity of his position only after the plenary meeting. None of the Politburo members spoke at the plenum[4], trying to avoid an inadmissible situation in the party leadership, which com. Wieslaw had created by his behavior. But com. Wieslaw didn't want to admit his mistakes. In response to a resolution of the Politburo, which gave justifiable [the word deleted in the original - A.K.] and principal criticism of all false statements in com. Wieslaw's report at the CC plenum - com. Wieslaw in a written document still deepened his glaringly nationalistic deviation from the general line [2 last words deleted in the original - A.K.] of the foundations of Marxism-Leninism. Having heard sharp criticism of this document at the Politburo meeting he refused to discuss it and stated he was ready to resign from his position of secretary general of the party. But the following day he said he has no objections to the Politburo resolution criticizing his report and withdraws his written statement. Due to his health condition he demanded a leave, as a result of which the Politburo has decided to convene a CC plenary meeting for the purpose of eliminating the ideological consequences of the June plenum, without Wieslaw's participation, whom we indeed recognized as seriously ill.

At the July plenum we have eliminated anti-Marxist guiding principles, relating to

questions raised in Wieslaw's report not through criticism of that report, but through an analysis of questions raised in the report from the point of view of Marxist-Leninist theory, applying the method of self-criticism in a broader sense and not connecting it directly to com. Wieslaw. Decisions of this plenum have been received by the whole party with great enthusiasm.

d) Under our pressure com. Wieslaw sent greetings to the CC plenum stating that he fully agrees with the Politburo decisions. This fact allowed us to hope that com. Wieslaw, after a rest, would be able to enter on a road of sincere self-criticism of his mistakes.

However, com. Wieslaw, unfortunately, has deepened his mistakes by new facts. In talks with comrades he has taken a negative position towards the resolution of the Information Bureau on the Yugoslav question, particularly on collectivization. He was of the opinion that the resolution of the Information Bureau had been a consequence of pressure by the VKP(b) on the people's democracies, in which the question of transition of the village on a socialist road should be carried out at a slower rate through a fully voluntary development of cooperative forms of agricultural production.

e) In connection with com. Wieslaw's leave coming to an end, the Politburo has decided to send to him a delegation composed of three comrades^[5] to clarify his attitude toward his mistakes through self-criticism. Com. Wieslaw received this proposal with amazement, referring to his formal statement, that he is in solidarity with the Politburo's resolutions.

The Politburo is recognizing this as wriggling out of the bolshevik duty of a communist from a sincere self-criticism of one's mistakes.

Taking into consideration the above circumstances, the Politburo at its meeting held yesterday^[6], conducted a critical analysis of com. Wieslaw's behavior in the whole period when he had been holding the function of secretary general of the party and concluded that in the past, before Poland's liberation by the Red Army [superimposed on the deleted "Red" - A.K.] com. Wieslaw had revealed serious deviations of a rightist-nationalistic type, when he had succumbed to the pressure by rightist elements in the party and almost on the eve of the country's liberation thought it possible to liquidate the KRN through its unification with the reactionary Council of National Unity.

A form of liquidation of the rightist deviation in the party:

1) An open fight within the party with the rightist-nationalistic views regardless of the person .

2) A more decisive and comprehensive self-criticism and a fight with any hesitations of an ideological type. The Politburo considers itself guilty for permitting such hesitancy with particular comrades and with com. Wieslaw, approaching them often in a conciliatory manner or being even under their influence.

3) Organizational conclusions.

4) The necessity of change in the position of President [RP]^[7].

5) Asks for advice^[8].

II. A request to receive the Politburo^[9].

III. The agenda of the conference^[10].

Original, the manuscript in Russian.

^[1] In the preserved materials of the CC PPR there has been found no correspondence, which would confirm contacts with the VKP(b) leadership relating to the crisis in the PPR leadership.

^[2] According to the list of attendance 153 persons participated in the meeting.

^[3] Reference is probably made to O. Dłuski.

^[4] Not correct. R. Zambrowski did participate, though in fact he limited himself to discussing organizational matters, without taking position towards W. Gomulka's report.

^[5] Translator's note: at this point reference is made to footnote No. 29, which in this segment is not available. That footnote most likely gives the composition of that delegation.

^[6] Reference is made to the previous footnote, No. 29, which is available only in the Polish original edition of the book.

^[7] Such change didn't occur.

^[8] In the Polish archives there are no documents regarding that meeting of B. Bierut with Stalin. Judging from the proceedings of the CC PPR on August 31-September 3, 1948 and from its resolutions one can assume that the theses and draft decisions proposed by Bierut had been met with Stalin's approval.

^[9] Talks is probably here of a visit of the CC PPR Politburo's delegation. No data about such visit.

^[10] It hasn't been established about what kind of conference the reference is made here.