

October 20, 1956
**Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC
Presidium on 20 October 1956**

Citation:

"Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 20 October 1956",
October 20, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, LI.
49-50, compiled by V. N. Malin. Published in CWIHP Bulletin 8-9, p.388.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/111877>

Summary:

Notes from the meeting of the CPSU Presidium on the issues of Poland and Hungary. Soviet officials discuss preventing the ouster of Polish Marshal Konstantin Rokossowski and forming a committee to possibly replace Gomulka. The Presidium considers events in Hungary with recommendations to dispatch Mikoyan, recall troops to their units, and draft an informational report.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 20 October 1956

Those Taking Part: Bulganin, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Molotov, Pervukhin, Saburov, Suslov, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Zhukov, Shepilov, Furtseva, Pospelov, Serov.

I. Briefing from the CPSU Delegation about the Trip to Warsaw.(1) (Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov, Kaganovich, Konev, Zhukov)

1. There's only one way out-put an end to what is in Poland. If Rokossowski is kept, we won't have to press things for a while.(2)

Maneuvers.

Prepare a document.

Form a committee.(3)

2. The ambassador, Cde. Ponomarenko, was grossly mistaken in his assessment of Ochab and Gomulka.(4)

3. We should invite to Moscow representatives from the Communist parties of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, the GDR, and Bulgaria.(5) Perhaps we should send CC officials to China for informational purposes.(6)

4. Send information. Take notice of information. Think through the questions that have been raised.

II. On Hungary.

We need to think it over, perhaps send Cde. Mikoyan.(7)

Cdes. Mikoyan and Zhukov must consider recalling soldiers to their units.(18)

Cde. Mikoyan is to draft information for the fraternal parties.(9)

Pull out the KGB advisers

[Source: TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, Ll. 49-50, compiled by V. N. Malin]

Translator's Notes

1. On 19 October 1956, the day before this Presidium meeting, Khrushchev led a top-level Soviet delegation on an unannounced visit to Warsaw. The Soviet delegates held tense negotiations with the Polish leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka, in an effort to prevent the removal of Marshal Konstantin Rokossowski and other officials from the Politburo of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). The Soviet delegates were unsuccessful in their task, despite exerting strong military and political pressure on Gomulka. For a fuller account of the meeting, see the notes by one of the participants, Anastas Mikoyan, in "Zapis' besedy N. S. Khrushcheva v Varshave," October 1956, No. 233 (Strictly Secret-Special Dossier), in APRF, Osobaya papka, F. 3, Op. 65, D. 2, Ll. 1-14.

2. Marshal Konstantin Rokossowski, a Polishborn officer who had lived most of his life in the Soviet Union and was a marshal in the Soviet army, was installed as defense minister and commander-in-chief in Poland in December 1949. He also was a full member of the PZPR Politburo. He was one of hundreds of high-ranking Soviet officers who were brought into the Polish army in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Not surprisingly, their presence caused widespread resentment. For a detailed account of this phenomenon, see Edward Jan Nalepa, *Oficerowie Radziecky w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1943-1968: Studium historyczno-wojskowe* (Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut

Historyczny, 1992). Here and elsewhere in Malin's notes, Rokossowski's surname is misspelled as "Rokkosowski." The spelling has been corrected in the translation.

3. It is not entirely clear from these brief points what the Soviet Presidium was intending to do. Most evidence suggests, however, that they planned to hold new military exercises in Poland and to form a "provisional revolutionary committee" of pro-Soviet Polish officials, who would then be installed in place of Gomulka. This is roughly what occurred with Hungary in early November, when a "revolutionary workers' and peasants' government" was formed in Moscow, with Janos Kadar and Ferenc Munnich at its head. Kadar's government was installed when Soviet troops moved in on 4 November.

4. Khrushchev declined to mention that he himself- and the rest of the Soviet leadership- had "grossly" misjudged the situation in Poland over the previous few months. This was evident, for example, when Ochab stopped in Moscow in September 1956 on his way back from Beijing. See "Priem Posla Pol'skoi Narodnoi Respubliki v SSSR tov. V. Levikovskogo, 10 sentyabrya 1956 g.," 11 September 1956 (Secret), memorandum from N. Patolichev, Soviet deputy foreign minister, in Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (AVPRF), F. Referentura po Pol'she, Op. 38, Por. 9, Papka, 126, D. 031, L. 1.

5. This session of the CPSU CC Presidium was held on 24 October. See the assessment of the meeting and translation of handwritten Czech notes by Mark Kramer, "Hungary and Poland, 1956: Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting on East European Crises, 24 October 1956,"

6. As it turned out, Khrushchev phoned Mao, and the Chinese leader decided to send a high-level delegation to Moscow for consultations. The delegation, led by Liu Shaoqi, arrived on 23 October and stayed until the 31st.

7. Not until three days later would the uprising in Hungary begin, but Andropov's telegrams from Budapest on 12 and 14 October had kept the CPSU leadership apprised of the rapidly mounting crisis within the HWP and Hungarian society. The two telegrams were declassified in 1992 and published in "Vengriya, aprel'-oktyabr' 1956 g.," pp. 110-128.

8. The reference here is to the large number of Soviet officers who were busy at the time helping out with the harvest. Although the uprising in Hungary had not yet begun, Soviet troops in that country had been preparing since mid-July to undertake large-scale operations aimed at "upholding and restoring public order." A full "Plan of Operations for the Special Corps to Restore Public Order on the Territory of Hungary," which received the codename "Volna" (Wave), was approved on 20 July 1956 by General Pyotr Lashchenko. See "Plan deistvii Osobogo korpusa po vosstanovleniyu obshchestvennogo poryadka na territorii Vengrii," in Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Ministerstva oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii (TsAMO), F. 32, Op. 701291, D. 15, Ll. 130-131. See also the account by Lieut.-General E. I. Malashenko, "Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta" (Part 1), *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No 10 (October 1993), pp. 24-25. The proposal to recall Soviet troops from their agricultural work was part of the "Volna" plan, which placed Soviet forces on increased alert in mid-October and brought them to full combat alert by 20-21 October at the behest of the Soviet General Staff. The full plan was due to be put into effect when a signal known as "Kompas" was received.

9. No such informational report had actually been prepared by 21 October, when a meeting of Eastbloc leaders was hastily arranged. But by the time the meeting was held on 24 October, the start of the uprising in Hungary on 23 October forced Khrushchev to cover the events in Hungary in some detail. See Kramer, "Hungary and Poland, 1956," pp. 1, 50-56.