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The Polish-Soviet Talks in Moscow: October 10-15, 1966

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Summary:

Gomulka and Brezhnev discuss the Cultural Revolution in China and its implications for international communism. Also addressed is Chinese attitudes toward Vietnam.

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Secret

(Excerpts regarding China)

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Gomulka: I would like to discuss, in our opinion, the most important matters, that is, the war in Vietnam, as well as the whole situation in China and the CCP's position.

...

Gomulka: The second issue. We need to find an answer to the following question: how to assess the events currently taking place in China? I mean here the so-called Cultural Revolution. I have not yet encountered any deeper attempts to assess these events. It is difficult for us to provide such an assessment since all the information we get boils down to what the Chinese press is publishing and to what the Hunweibin [Red Guards] are writing about on their posters.

There is no doubt that the name itself - the cultural revolution - is a misnomer. This is just a façade behind something else taking place. The point here is the internal struggle within the [Chinese Communist] party. After all, this is clear from the communiqué of the XI CC CCP Plenum. It says clearly that the fire needs to be directed against the internal capitalists and revisionists. Besides, the development of events testifies to this. The 18 [provincial party] committees have been either broken up or attacked. Apparently, a kind of situation has emerged over there, which was considered as very dangerous by a particular group within the Chinese leadership.

It is clear from many statements that those who wanted to get closer to "the modern Khrushchevite revisionism" were represented in the party. This is understandable. Besides, it could not happen otherwise given the failure of their foreign policy. One has to only point to Bandung II, the events in Indonesia, etc. This was a bankruptcy of their policy. People must have given this some thought.

Given the situation of the war intensification in Vietnam, when the masses are being mobilized to fend off the U.S. aggression, there were surely those in the party who questioned whether they could do so alone without the Soviet Union. Some must not have liked Mao's cult, which has reached the level of absurdity at this point. This must have also made some people think. You had the cult of Stalin, but in comparison with what has been happening in China, this was just an infantile illness. The cult [of Stalin] boiled down to and concentrated on political spheres. In China, however, there are absurd things happening. But, there are people who think clearly and who realize the ridiculousness of this phenomenon. Therefore, various factors could have caused the opposition.

Let's take the army, for example, in which they got rid of the military ranks and which was transformed into a guerrilla army. Mao's idea of the guerrilla army is currently being implemented and carried out in Vietnam. According to this theory, the entire Chinese nation is being prepared for guerrilla warfare. We should suppose that there must have been also elements of opposition within the army. Besides, we should look at things from the psychological point of view, that is, how people react to various kinds of events. In connection with the elimination of the military ranks, the economic situation of many people must also have worsened. This must have caused

dissatisfaction.

The situation is being shaped in such a manner that the main force, which some in the Chinese leadership want to rely on, is the army. This is the kind of force which will resolve not only the external, but also internal, problems.

The question arises: why were the Red Guards created in the first place? It seems that they were created, most of all, in order to spread fear among the society and the party organizations. A particular situation then arises, that is, people are scared. Subsequently, they begin to adapt to the new situation. Or perhaps it was difficult to do this by using the normal administrative methods and means. Because when you get rid of [the first] secretary, then you need to create some kind of accusations. Then, a discussion will ensue. Apparently, they thought that this method wouldn't reach their goals.

We are currently in the situation that we actually don't know who is in charge of all of this. There is no doubt that these are not spontaneous phenomena, because the addresses are being given, they point out who should be attacked. There is some kind of a power center. Whether there are seven of them, or perhaps a bigger circle of people, we don't know. We know, however, that many people have been removed from the leadership itself. For example, they removed Peng Zhen, whom we know very well and who chastised "the revisionists" with foam in his mouth during our meetings. Liu Shaoqi is silent. We know that he has been removed from a series of positions he held. Also, a whole bunch of other persons are being silent, for example, Deng Xiaoping, about whom we haven't heard anything recently. They have not been announcing any changes in leadership for years. This is why we don't know who is actually in charge of all of this.

There is no doubt that there's an internal struggle within the party. It is being played out in such a form for which the Chinese conditions allow. They want to get rid of the opposition. The question arises - what will all of this lead to? In order to answer this, we need to know the Chinese situation well. One thing is sure, that is, that such an attack on the party, which we are currently observing in China, would have disassembled the party in any other country for many years. Nobody would like to belong to this party. Who is doing this? Hongweibing [Red Guards] are, of course, working according to particular instructions. However, it would be a mistake to think that all of what the Red Guards are doing is based on instructions. There is much self-imposed initiative, for example, the destruction of cultural artifacts. I don't think that they were instructed to do so. But, they probably think that you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. The situation in China is truly complicated. Unfortunately, we can't offer any deeper analysis unless we get to know better the facts, people, and the situation.

In connection with this topic, I would like to move on to the issue of the world conference of communist and workers' parties...I spoke about this issue with [John] Gollan [the leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain], whom I told that in fact he's carrying out an opportunist policy. I said that the situation in the communist movement would change only when the CCP feels that is fully isolated or almost isolated. Only then will we be able to force it to change its position. [I told him] that with his wavering he was only helping the Chinese. This is opportunism. He read this as an offense and left without signing the communiqué about the talks.

When it comes to your formulation about closing oneself in and focusing only on own matters, and so on, then I would not agree with this. I took this as if it were directed at us.

Brezhnev: Absolutely not. I was talking about the situation in general terms.

Gomulka: We don't exclude the possibility of convening the conference without the participation of the Chinese party. But under the condition that this party is in fact being isolated. We can't say that your hitherto tactics of not exacerbating the situation and keeping silent in face of the CCP's attacks did not bring any results.

Brezhnev: We also agree.

Gomulka: The Chinese have become isolated on a very important and concrete issue, that is, the issue of Vietnam. Nobody in the world understands why the Chinese don't want to create a joint front. Therefore, a calm tactic bore better results than a quarrel eye for an eye.

If we can bring about a conference in which the most important parties will take part (even though the quantity also counts), then we can organize such a conference also without the participation of China. But, if such a conference were to be an expression of an official split, which exists in reality, then would such a conference be really necessary?

...

Gomulka: ... Now the issue of Johnson's statement...The [U.S.] administration decided to take a step in order to strengthen its propaganda position, as well as to in fact get closer to the USSR. This rapprochement, in our opinion, serves two purposes:

I. To show that despite the war in Vietnam, they are able to come to an understanding with the USSR...

II. They want to all the more pit the Chinese against the USSR, that is, if one is able to do more in this area. This would be very convenient for the US since this situation could lead to a further exacerbation of relations between the USSR and China, not even excluding a military conflict. This is a classic example of a policy conducted by the imperialist nation. We should also take into consideration this second goal.

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Brezhnev: The Vietnam issue. We fully agree with your opinion that we need to know the real position and aims of the policy conducted by the Vietnamese Workers' Party. However, so far we have not been able to achieve anything on this end. We see the reflection of their dependence on the Chinese. We have done a lot to persuade the Vietnamese to sensible negotiations...

We are in full agreement with your analysis regarding China. I would only like to emphasize that our position will change on this issue. The situation has changed so much that we are of the opinion that we should tell our party and the nation everything. We will provide them with the assessment of these events.

I think that some kind of a misunderstanding took place between us regarding the issue of the conference of 17 parties. We consider this conference as useful. I only wanted to say that this phase is over. When it comes to an international conference, then our positions are the same. We think that we should present the issue openly, that is, without talking about the date or place for this conference. Our propositions were of a fully preliminary nature. The main point is eliminate the ban of talking [?] about the issue of the conference. How we will go about it, then this is another matter which demands a more thorough planning [thinking].

The Chinese problem must be investigated. We don't know where the "cultural revolution" will lead to. They have already held campaigns to eliminate flies, sparrows, and so on. But, currently this campaign is a political one. I think that some kind of a social opposition took place over there. Chen I said clearly that the purpose of the cultural revolution was to avoid a state coup in China.

Some kind of a struggle must be going on over there. The CC CCP has 180 members, while at the latest plenum, according to the published documents, there were only 86 present. Where are the rest? Were they perhaps eliminated or removed from the CC? We know that they have removed additional 10 members from the CC following the latest plenum. All of this testifies to a complicated nature of processes that are taking place over there.

The list of the members of the highest Chinese leadership was not published by mistake either. We agree with you. We will try to get to know the processes taking place in China. We also know very little of what is going on over there. Our embassy is working in exceptionally difficult conditions. And, just as in other socialist countries, we do not carry out intelligence activities.

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