

October 19, 1956

Protocol No. 129, Meeting of the Polish Politburo

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Summary:

The Politburo discusses the meeting with the Soviet delegation shortly before and how to proceed with regard to the Soviets and the Plenum.

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Protocol No. 129

Meeting of the Politburo on 19, 20 and 21 October 1956
(during a pause in proceedings at the VIII Plenum)

The Politburo agrees to the following press communiqué:

On 19 October at 10:00 am the proceedings of the VIII Plenum began. After the meeting was opened by comrade Ochab, and the agenda accepted, comrades Wladyslaw Gomulka, Marian Spychalski, Zenon Kliszko, and Loga-Sowinski were added to the Central Committee so that they could take part in the discussions as fully fledged members.

Comrade Wieslaw [Wladyslaw Gomulka's wartime pseudonym] informed the Politburo about the meeting at the airport with the Soviet delegation. "Talks like this I have never held with party comrades. It was beyond comprehension. How can you take such a tone and, with such epitaphs, turn on people who in good faith turned to you? Khrushchev first greeted, above all, comrade Rokossowski and the generals; underlining-these are people on whom I depend. Turning to us, he said [in Russian]: 'The treacherous activity of Comrade Ochab has become evident, this number won't pass here!' You needed a lot of patience not to react to such talk. The entire discussion was carried out in this loud tone, such that everyone at the airport, even the chauffeurs, heard it.

I proposed that we drive with them to Belvedere Palace and speak calmly. I told them that above all else we had to open the Plenum. They would not agree to this. At Belvedere Palace the talks had a similar tone. They told us that we actually spat in their faces because we did not agree to meet with the delegation before the Plenum. They are upset with us because the Politburo Commission proposed a new list of members to the Politburo without a number of comrades who are supporters of a Polish-Soviet union; namely, comrades Rokossowski, [Zenon] Nowak, Mazur, Jozwiak. I explained to them that we don't have such tendencies. We do not want to break the alliance with the Soviet Union. It came to a clash. Comrade Khrushchev said [in Russian]: 'That number won't pass here. We are ready for active intervention.'

[Here Gomulka quotes his own remarks to Khrushchev:] I understand that it is possible to talk in an aggressive tone, but if you talk with a revolver on the table you don't have an evenhanded discussion. I cannot continue the discussions under these conditions. I am ill and I cannot fill such a function in my condition. We can listen to the complaints of the Soviet comrades, but if decisions are to be made under the threat of physical force I am not up to it. My first step in Party work, which I am taking after a long break, must be interrupted.

I don't want to break off Polish-Soviet friendship. I believe what we propose will strengthen the friendship. Any other form of resolution to these affairs will only strengthen the anti-Soviet campaign. I would like for the comrades to voice their views on this matter: intervention or the conditions under which to continue the talks."

Comrade Zawadzki: Comrade Wieslaw's position is correct. We do not see our situation, including the personnel decision taken by the Politburo, as a menacing upheaval in the country leading to a break in Polish-Soviet relations. Yet the decision not to change the position of the Politburo has to be taken with certain cautions in order not to intensify the situation. I also propose, in connection with the situation in Warsaw, to issue an appeal, signed by the Politburo and comrade Wieslaw, to the Enterprise Council, to students, about the arrival of the Soviet delegation in the common interest of the state and nation.

Comrade Zambrowski: The situation in the country is tense. I am on the side of what was said by comrade Wieslaw. Do not make any changes in the Politburo's propositions. I am opposed to the issuing of an appeal. Let the Plenum decide.

Comrade Rokossowski: Comrade Wieslaw gave us an objective assessment, but you can see that there are reasons why the Soviet comrades talk like this, and why comrade Khrushchev vehemently exploded. I am of the opinion that four comrades should go to the discussions and listen to the arguments of the Soviet comrades. More cold-bloodedness. It is unnecessary to aggravate the situation.

Comrade Witold [Jozwiak]: I am of the opinion that we should leave the Politburo in its old composition and co-opt only comrades Wieslaw and Loga-Sowinski.

Comrade Gierek: I am of the opinion that the decisions of the Politburo are correct and we cannot overturn them. It is not pleasant to listen to such malicious language.

Comrade [Zenon] Nowak: I agree with comrade Gomulka. Let the Soviet comrades calmly explain what they want.

Comrades Nowak, Roman: I support in full the resolutions of the Politburo.

Comrade Rapacki: We cannot continue talks under the threat of intervention and under the charge that we are less worthy than those comrades from the old leadership who were not selected to form the new composition. I am for maintaining the decisions of the Politburo.

Comrade Dworakowski: We have to do everything so as not to disturb our friendship with the Soviet Union and we have to concede.

Comrade [Eugeniusz] Stawinski: We have always directed ourselves with great affection towards the Soviet Union, but to achieve a complete consolidation with the country we cannot accept concessions.

Comrade Jedrychowski: All concessions will be interpreted to mean that the CC [Central Committee] of our Party does not operate freely and that the changes are dictated by the Soviet delegation.

Comrade [Hilary] Chelchowski: I am of the opinion that it was incorrect for the Politburo to remove comrades [Zenon] Nowak and Rokossowski. Let us think of what we are doing.

Comrade Ochab: It was very painful to hear comrade Khrushchev. I did not deserve such treatment. I would also like comrade Rokossowski to explain the situation in the army.

Comrade Rokossowski: I feel that there are certain insinuations being directed at me. I do not feel any guilt. I did not give the army any alarm signals. I simply ordered, in any case with the agreement of comrade Ochab, that one military battalion from Legionowo be put on alert in order to ensure the security, from possible enemy provocation, for the unexpected arrival of the Soviet delegation.