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Notes on Stalin's Statement from a Meeting with a Bulgarian Delegation

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Summary:

Stalin rebukes the Bulgarian leadership for postponing elections and fearing their opposition. He gives advice on the reorganization of Bulgaria and its foreign relations.

Original Language:

Bulgarian

Contents:

Translation - English

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Moscow, Op.g.30, 1945

I could see from your project that you are very frightened. I can read disturbance in your voice and now you are frightened and puzzled. Nobody wanted from you the changes in the composition of the government. You have postponed the elections and with this you ended the problem. We have agreed to your postponing the elections, as it is not an important request, but as far as important changes are concerned, we shall not agree. If the British and the Americans are not pleased with something, they should appeal to the Allied Control Commission (ACC). There they will be informed that the ACC could not make decisions on such problems and will direct them to our government. We do not agree to concessions of any kind and nothing could be done without us. For more than two years the Americans have pledged to establish control over the freed countries. They proposed control especially of the Greek elections with the obvious intent to say later that the elections, carried out by the government of Vulgaris, have been free. We, however, rejected this pledge, for it will be a negative precedent for Bulgaria and Romania. We have stated: "Even though we consider the Greek government a semi-fascist one, we are against the control, because it would mean foreign intervention in the affairs of a sovereign country. As far as the concern on the Romanian government and the appeal of the King for changes of the government, we said that we support Oroza government and sent them to hell. If you go this way - changing the composition of the government every time you are told to - where would you get?! You should withstand your right to solve the problem what kind of government to have - by yourself. From this point of view the Declaration of the National Committee of the Fatherland Front for postponing the elections was not right nor well considered. It was made too domestically. It was better to say that the elections had to be postponed because of the claims of the opposition, rather than saying that you were doing this under pressure from abroad. You should have presented the argument that without opposition any kind of democratic government would be impossible.

And you shouldn't be afraid that the opposition could still be displeased by your concessions; that is what the opposition is for - to be unhappy. It is impossible to please the opposition in everything. Ask yourself whether in Britain the Conservative Party opposition was pleased when it received no more than one third of the votes in the elections? You have missed one important point in the Declaration the restoration of the religious freedoms by the Fatherland Front. Generally speaking, the Declaration is organized too domestically - too many curses towards Petkov.^[2] In a society where there are antagonistic classes an opposition should definitely exist. As Germans say, you can't please both the employers and the employees at one and the same time. Only a society without antagonistic classes, like ours, can manage without opposition. And even then, sometimes we need to form self-opposition in the form of self-criticism. Some time ago, when the problem was to provide concession to Urkwart, Lenin (who, himself was against the concession) had to form an opposition to get rid of British pressure. He was saying: "I, myself, do agree but the Buharin opposition is against." Your society is still a society with classes and it needs opposition. It would be better the opposition to be legalized so that it could be controlled, and to make it loyal, rather than to force it work underground. You have interests in having an opposition. If you work well you would be able to hold in your hands the Petkov opposition and to get use of it in various occasions. It is even better for you to have an opposition of 50-60 figures; you have to be proud in front of Bevin that you have an opposition. The opposition in your country should be like a rod; it will make you never ease off and will urge you to work.

In some parts of your project you confess that sometimes the opposition is right. Certain dissatisfaction among the masses could sometimes be seen better by the opposition rather than by those who are in power. Look at how Churchill was misled in his expectations of the elections. Are you absolutely sure that the people are following you? And then, why did you get frightened by the opposition?! Don't forget that in your country the development of the Soviet system may develop differently -

through the Parliament. This way is slower but it will lead you to the same goal. Lenin didn't exclude the parliamentary way to the Soviet power.

You'd better leave the agrarian reform to the Parliament. In your country it shouldn't be against the pomeshchiks (the large landowners) but against the kulaks. The kulaks are connected to the rest of the peasant mass in many ways. When we were sweeping off the kulaks as a class the peasants in many places were crying. Why now, right before the elections, you should turn the kulaks, their relatives and friends against yourself. You begin a struggle and want to fulfil ten objectives at a time. Define one, two, three objectives that could be achieved more easily. Let the Parliament carry out the agrarian reform. It will be more authoritative and stable in the field.

The existence of a Unified Agrarian Party is unthinkable. The agrarian parties everywhere split into fractions. You could advise both of your agrarian fractions to unite. If this doesn't happen you should not regret too much. In the future it will be much better to have two mutually hostile agrarian fractions. The same could be said about the Social Democrats.

From people's point of view your election law is democratic. On the other hand, from the point of view of the formal democracy - it is not that democratic. You could allow the existence of some other parties outside the Fatherland Front. You may perform the elections in the middle of October. You should direct your agitation mainly against those who want to intervene in the internal affairs of Bulgaria. For elimination of the monarchy institutions you should summon the Great National Assembly. The oath of loyalty to the Monarch, required by the Constitution when the deputies accept their duty in the new Parliament, could be postponed with the explanation that a bill for elimination of the monarchy has been introduced.

The declaration of Stainov^[3] regarding the question of postponing the elections was a provocative declaration.

We haven't given up the idea of forming up an alliance between USSR and Bulgaria.

First of all, however, we would like to form an alliance with Romania. An alliance with Romania would mean that we have the right to keep troops there when we need them there. In this way our troops will actually come to your frontiers and thus the direct contacts with Bulgaria will be easier. Everything is settled with you, but we have to hurry with the Romanians. After the elections you could complete an alliance treaty with Yugoslavia and after that consider merging with it. But before this it would be better if you reach a reparation agreement between yourselves. You could think of an alliance with Romania as well. You could form such a union before the alliance with Yugoslavia, for some might say that you are following pan-Slavic objectives.

You could hardly change any territorial boundaries without a war. They should be changed in some way. From Turkey we want naval bases on the Dardanelles. They are against this. The problem will be solved at the Conference. If it isn't solved, we will raise the question for an outlet on the Mediterranean.

You should always take into consideration the position of Britain and USA. You should have normal relations with them. I'm really serious. You should not proclaim an eternal friendship with the USSR. You should work on it, but when the official policy of Bulgaria is formulated, you should emphasize on friendship relations and cooperation with Britain and America. You shouldn't leave the initiative to Petkov on that question. You personally, not Petkov, should say out loud that you want to maintain normal relations with Britain and America. It is a mistake to neglect the relations with the American representatives. It is necessary to send to them a group of reliable people.

For the time being the Labor Party is following Eden's foreign policy and is always asking him what to do. The only question on which they showed a different point of view, different from Churchill's and Eden's, was the question of the West frontiers of Poland; Churchill and Eden were objecting to this from the morning to the evening. And they did so, only because they were afraid that they were completely going to lose Poland. All of Churchill's advisors stayed with Attlee. Even the interpreters did not change their mind. Bevin reminds me of Noske, he is the same butcher - rough, self-conceited, with no culture. And as far as Attlee is concerned - he has no particular qualities. They are great fools; they got the power in a great country and they don't know what to do with it. They are empirically oriented and inevitably they will

confront the Conservators on the various practical problems. At the same time they have no plan of their own for their foreign policy.

Regarding the Greek problems, the boycott of the elections, the Greek communists intend to do, is a two-sided weapon. The boycott would be worthwhile if a national strike to overthrow the government is announced.

You should not rush to establish diplomatic relations with the Albanians. This could do them harm, for they are still very weak.

France doesn't have its own policy. At present the Americans make efforts to attract it on their side - perhaps with the question of Indo-China.

Preparation for restoring the postal relations between Bulgaria and the USSR are in progress.

Maybe the best thing to do is to reduce the number of Soviet troops in Bulgaria, but since you think it will be inconvenient to do it before the elections, maybe we will share their costs - in cash and provisions - half in half.

[1] The Bulgarian communist leaders Dimitrov and Kolarov and the Secretaries of the CC Traicho Kostov and Valko Chervenkov are present at the meeting. Kostov probably took the notes of Stalin's statement.

[2] Nikola Petkov - leader of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU). Minister in the first government of the Fatherland Front (September 9, 1944 - July 31, 1945), later leader of the United Anti-communist opposition. Arrested on June 7, 1947, sentenced to death and executed on September 23, 1947.

[3] Prof. Petko Stainov - Minister of Foreign Affairs (September 9, 1944 - March 31, 1946).