

SESSION OF THE CPSU CC POLITBURO

16 April 1981

Cde. L. I. BREZHNEV presiding.

Also taking part: Cdes. Yu. V. Andropov, M. S. Gorbachev, V. V. Grishin,
A. A. Gromyko, N. A. Tikhonov, D. F. Ustinov,
K. U. Chernenko, P. N. Demichev, V. V. Kuznetsov,
M. S. Solomentsev, I. V. Kapitonov, M. V. Zimyanin,
K. V. Rusakov

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2. On Cde. L. I. Brezhnev's Discussion with the PZPR CC First Secretary, Cde. S. Kania (by telephone)

BREZHNEV. Yesterday I spoke by phone with Kania.¹ Notes from the discussion were distributed. The comrades have already looked through them, so I will be brief.

From the conversation with Kania it was clear that after the Sejm the friends were in a more upbeat mood. They had greater self-confidence. This in itself is no small thing.

But it would be impossible to overlook the fact that the situation, as before, remains extremely difficult. The current lull is clearly only a short-term phenomenon. It was in this spirit that I, as you could see, spoke with Kania.

In general it's very important that we now maintain the right tone in our relations with our friends. On the one hand, we shouldn't badger them without need, and we should avoid making them so nervous that they throw up their hands in despair. On the other hand, we should exert constant pressure and tactfully draw their attention to the errors and weaknesses in their policy, and we should offer comradely advice about what they should do.

Comrades Andropov and Ustinov had a highly productive meeting with Kania and Jaruzelski. This sort of practice, it would seem, should be continued until the crisis begins to subside. Perhaps we should think about holding a similar confidential meeting

¹ Translator's Note: Kania recounted this telephone call at a meeting of the PZPR Politburo two days later, "Protokol Nr. 88 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 20 kwietnia 1981 r.," 18 April 1981 (Secret), in AAN, Protokoly z posiedzen Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 1981r., T.4, which for some reason is not featured in Wlodek, ed., *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego*.

in the near future with the participation this time of Cdes. Suslov and Rusakov.²

Our Commission, I realize, is constantly meeting and considering what should be done. They promised that they will soon offer some ideas and proposals.³

Along with this very important work, we must also continue preparing a broader — one might say strategic — analysis, which will permit us to stand back from the daily flow of events and take a longer-term perspective on the course of events in Poland and around it.⁴

And one final thing. I wanted to ask the comrades whether it's worth informing our closest friends about the discussion that took place.⁵ They are very alarmed by the situation in Poland, and for them it will be important to know about the actions we have taken.

If there are no objections, that's what we'll do.⁶

ANDROPOV. The discussion was very rich in content.

CHERNENKO. During this discussion, clear and precise instructions were given to the comrades representing the PZPR leadership, and, moreover, Leonid Il'ich spoke approvingly about certain of their measures. That's very good.

USTINOV. The Polish friends received exhaustive instructions.

² Translator's Note: This statement implies that there were differences of view—even if only minor ones—among the members of the Suslov Commission. Without reading too much into Brezhnev's remarks, one might infer that his proposal to have Suslov and Rusakov conduct the next meeting was motivated in part by a desire to take account of disparate positions within the CPSU leadership and the Commission. A substantial amount of evidence suggests, for example, that Ustinov on the one hand and Suslov on the other approached the Polish crisis in very different ways (i.e., Suslov emphasized an "internal" solution, whereas Ustinov was more willing to consider external options). Brezhnev's apparent effort to solicit different viewpoints was in line with the way he handled the crisis in Czechoslovakia in 1968, when he permitted and even encouraged other members of the Politburo to express disagreements with one another. In 1968, of course, Brezhnev was a good deal younger and much more vigorous than in 1981, and in 1968 he still had to conform, at least to some degree, with the norms of collective leadership. Nevertheless, his style of crisis management after 1968 may have remained largely the same in this respect.

³ Translator's Note: Even as Brezhnev spoke, two major reports drafted by the Suslov Commission were being put into final form for submission to the CPSU Politburo. The documents, "O razvitii obstanovki v Pol'she i nekotorykh shagakh s nashei storony" and "Plan meropriyatii po okazaniyu pomoshchi rukovodstvu PORP v orgazatsionnom i ideologicheskome ukreplenii partii" (both cited above), were approved by the Politburo at its next session on 23 April 1981.

⁴ Translator's Note: To some extent, the first report prepared by the Suslov Commission, "O razvitii obstanovki v Pol'she i nekotorykh shagakh s nashei storony," took a broader and more long-term view.

⁵ Translator's Note: The phrase "our closest friends" refers to the other Warsaw Pact leaders: Erich Honecker, Gustav Husak, Todor Zhivkov, Janos Kadar, and—to a lesser extent—Nicolae Ceausescu.

⁶ Translator's Note: This indeed is what was done. See "Vermerk uber ein Telefongesprach des Generalsekretars des ZK der KPdSU, Genossen Leonid Il'ic Breznev, mit dem Ersten Sekretar des ZK der PVAP, Genossen Stanislaw Kania, am 15.4.1981," 18 April 1981 (Top Secret), in SAPMDB, ZPA, J IV 2/202/551.

TIKHONOV. Now it's important that they correctly follow these instructions.

BREZHNEV. I definitely think we should inform the leaders of the other fraternal parties about this conversation with the Polish leaders.

The members of the Politburo support that proposal.

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A decision is adopted:

1. To approve the telephone conversation that the CPSU CC General Secretary, Cde. Brezhnev, had with the PZPR CC First Secretary, S. Kania.

2. To consider it worthwhile to inform the leaders of other fraternal parties about the content of the discussion, taking account of the exchange of views at the session of the CPSU CC Politburo.

3. To instruct the CC Department to prepare an informational document about this question.

[*Source: TsKhSD, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 41*]