

SESSION OF THE CPSU CC POLITBURO

18 June 1981

Cde. L. I. BREZHNEV presiding.

Also taking part: Cdes. Yu. V. Andropov, M. S. Gorbachev, V. V. Grishin,
A. A. Gromyko, A. P. Kirilenko, A. Ya. Pel'she,
M. A. Suslov, N. A. Tikhonov, D. F. Ustinov,
K. U. Chernenko, P. N. Demichev, V. V. Kuznetsov,
B. N. Ponomarev, I. V. Kapitonov, V. I. Dolgikh,
K. V. Rusakov

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12. On Cde L. I. Brezhnev's Information About His Discussion with Cde. S. Kania

BREZHNEV. As you know, for a long time I didn't want to speak with Kania, but he was determined to have a conversation. From Friday until Monday he was calling every day. Then, on Tuesday, the 16th of June, I couldn't any longer avoid having a conversation, so I linked up with him, as had been arranged with the members of the CPSU CC Politburo. I had a conversation with him about matters that were discussed with the members of the Politburo.¹

After mutual greetings, Kania began expressing his gratitude for the letter sent by the CPSU CC to the PZPR CC.² He said that they value this letter as a new token of the

¹ Translator's Note: For a summary of Kania's version of the phone call, as presented to the PZPR Politburo on the same day as this CPSU Politburo meeting, see "Protokol Nr. 100 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 18 czerwca 1981 r.," 18 June 1981 (Secret), reprinted in Wlodek, ed., *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, esp. pp. 406-407.

² Translator's Note: The reference here is to a letter dated 5 June 1981, which claimed that "S. Kania, W. Jaruzelski, and other Polish comrades" were still pursuing a "policy of capitulation and compromise." The letter warned that the Soviet Union "will not leave fraternal, socialist Poland in the lurch." See "List Komitetu Centralnego KPZR do Komitetu Centralnego PZPR," *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), 6-7 June 1981, pp. 1, 6. For more on the Polish leadership's reactions to the letter, see "Protokol Nr. 97 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 6 czerwca 1981 r.," 6 June 1981 (Secret), reprinted in Wlodek, ed., *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, pp. 381-396. See also Kania's and Jaruzelski's accounts in *Zatrzymac konfrontacje*, pp. 154-169; and *Stan wojenny dlaczego*, pp. 152-156, respectively. The CPSU Politburo ordered lower-level party and state organizations throughout the Soviet Union to apprise all party members and state workers of the letter's contents, and to report back to Moscow on the reactions they encountered. The informational meetings and reports from subordinate bodies were completed by mid-June, and from then on the letter was a definitive codification of Soviet concerns and objectives. See the important documents about this process in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 76, Ll. 1-39.

CPSU CC's concern about the fate of socialism in Poland and about our relations. According to Kania, this letter is highly influential and useful.

Kania then described the plenum and the decisions adopted there.³ And he again emphasized the influence of our letter on the mood of the participants in the plenum. He himself, that is, Kania, declared at the plenum that the CPSU CC has every right to react this way, and that there is sufficient reason to react in precisely this fashion.

With regard to the plenum, it, according to Kania, featured a lot of criticism. The discussion at the plenum was heated and far-reaching. All the speakers at the plenum endorsed the letter from the CPSU CC. Criticism of the PZPR Politburo and leadership overall was extensive. A question was even raised about a vote of confidence.⁴ The plenum voted by a majority not to make any changes in the leadership until the Party congress. Kania assured me that he and the comrades who spoke at the plenum are determined to ensure that the congress is conducted as a congress of a Marxist party should be. Further efforts are under way to mobilize and energize PZPR members in the struggle against antisocialist forces.

Kania also briefly recounted the speech Jaruzelski had delivered at the Sejm. He emphasized that the speech had promised a firmer rebuff to the counterrevolution.

At this point I couldn't restrain myself and said to him: Comrade Kania, how many times have I spoken with you about such things since the very start of this long, drawn-out affair? The whole time I told you what must be done and said that you couldn't respond to counterrevolutionary activities through words alone.⁵

³ Translator's Note: The PZPR Central Committee's Eleventh Plenum on 9-10 June was convened specifically to discuss the CPSU Central Committee's letter.

⁴ Translator's Note: A hard-line member of the PZPR Politburo, Tadeusz Grabski, tried to use the Soviet letter as a pretext to get rid of Kania. Grabski's effort to orchestrate a vote of no-confidence in Kania was ultimately rebuffed, but Kania had to expend a good deal of political capital to survive. The maneuvering by Grabski and other Polish hard-liners raised questions about the Soviet leadership's motives for sending the letter. Some observers concluded that the letter, with its harsh criticism of Kania's and Jaruzelski's performance, was part of a deliberate—albeit unsuccessful—attempt by Moscow to help the PZPR's "healthy forces" undermine their moderate colleagues before the Ninth Party Congress. Among those who now subscribe to this view are both Kania and Jaruzelski; see *Zatrzymac konfrontacje*, pp. 154-169; and *Stan wojenny dlaczego*, pp. 152-156. Substantial documentation is available to support their conclusions. See, for example, "Vermerk über das Treffen der Genossen Leonid Il'ic Breznev, Erich Honecker und Gustav Husak am 16. Mai 1981 im Kreml in Moskau," 18 May 1981 (Top Secret), in SAPMDB, ZPA, vorl. SED 41599; "Fernschreiben Honeckers an die I. Sekretäre der Bezirksleitungen der SED vom 6. Juni 1981," 6 June 1981 (Top Secret), in SAPMDB, ZPA, J IV 2/2/A-2403; and "Arbeitsprotokoll Nr. 7/81 der Politburositzung vom 9.6.1981," 9 June 1981 (Top Secret), in *ibid.* See also Voronkov, "Sobytiya 1980-1981 gg. v Pol'she," pp. 106-107.

⁵ Translator's Note: Brezhnev's comments here echo the sentiments expressed in a Soviet diplomatic cable to the CPSU Politburo in late May: "We consider it imperative to inform you of dire reports coming in from highly reliable and trustworthy sources, who request that we convey to you how grave the situation in [Poland] has become, so grave indeed that it might bring about the destruction of the socialist order in Poland. Attacks against the MO [Public Police] and SB [Security Service] have reached a decisive phase. . . . We must frankly report that the current leaders of the party and government [in Poland] do not want to resort to any decisive measures and are unwilling to do anything concrete to put an end to the patently anti-socialist, anti-Soviet actions of right-wing forces. Malicious anti-Sovietism is waxing ever larger. . . . The

Kania agreed with this. He noted that after the plenum there had been fewer hostile actions and fewer provocative incidents. Even Walesa had said they must pursue a different strategy.

In short, Kania believes that conditions for the Party's struggle have improved, and that now the main thing is to restore order in the mass media. They approved a decision to dismiss the head of the CC Department for the Press, Radio, and Television, Kłasa.⁶ A decision also was approved to dismiss the chairman of the Committee on Television and several editors.⁷ There will be other decisions as well. They are beginning to hold a trial for Moczulski.⁸

creation of Solidarity branches in the MO is the beginning of the political end of People's Poland. It should be underscored that in the coming 2-3 weeks, all will be decided: Either there will be a turnaround in the policy adopted by the leadership of the [Polish] party, or events similar to those at other times in Hungary and Czechoslovakia will be repeated here." Quoted from "O trevoznykh faktakh dal'neishogo davleniya na organy Narodnoi militsii (MO)," Cable No. 94 (Top Secret), 27 May 1981, from G. Rudov, Soviet consul-general in Krakow, in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 611, Ll. 2-3. According to Georgii Shakhnazarov (in an interview in Providence, RI, 7 May 1998), this cable was widely circulated within the central CPSU apparatus because of its crucial timing and its revelations about potential turmoil in the Polish police and security forces. Rudov followed up on the cable by transmitting documents to Moscow showing the "profound influence that Solidarity is exerting at every level of the MO." In Krakow, Katowice, Nowa Huta, and numerous other cities, he argued, "the police are under the full control of the new, independent unions." See Cable No. 101 (Secret), 16 June 1981, plus the accompanying documents, in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 611, Ll. 4-16. His reports confirmed an earlier Soviet assessment, based on high-level sources in Warsaw, that "the situation in the [Polish] state security forces" had "changed a good deal" and that "only half of the forces would be willing to use weapons against the counterrevolution. The other half would remain neutral." Quoted from "O besede s chlenom TsK PORP t. Vron'skim," Ll. 27-28.

⁶ Translator's Note: On the dismissal of Jozef Kłasa, see "Protokol Nr. 100 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 18 czerwca 1981 r.," p. 414. As is evident in numerous PZPR Politburo protocols collected in Włodek, ed., *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, Kłasa had been coming under sharp criticism for the past several months from Stefan Olszowski and Tadeusz Grabski, who were broadly responsible for ideological affairs. Yet ironically, it was Kłasa who had publicly warned on 4 December 1980, at a time of acute tension with the Soviet Union, that if "socialism were to be endangered" and "authority were to pass from the hands of democracy [i.e., the PZPR] into the hands of antisocialist elements, Polish Communists would have both the right and the duty to ask for assistance from the Soviet Union and other [Warsaw Pact] countries." Kłasa's post as head of the Central Committee department was taken over by Lesław Tokarski, a close ally of Olszowski. Tokarski shifted the department back to a much more orthodox approach.

⁷ Translator's Note: A new chairman of the State Committee on Radio and Television, Władysław Loranc, was appointed in July 1981. He had long been a hardline party loyalist.

⁸ Translator's Note: Leszek Moczulski, a radical political dissident and former journalist, was one of the founders of the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO) in March 1977 and the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) in September 1979. Under his leadership, KPN emerged as one of the boldest anti-Communist groups in Poland in 1980. He was arrested in August 1980 along with several prominent members of KOR for encouraging "anti-state actions" (i.e., the strikes), but he was temporarily released in accordance with the Gdansk agreement. On 24 September 1980, Moczulski was re-arrested on charges of "slandering the dignity of the Polish People's Republic" because of an interview he gave to *Der Spiegel* in which he affirmed that KPN's goal was to establish a multiparty system, overthrow Communism, and free Poland of Soviet domination. The KOR dissidents had all been released, but Moczulski and three other KPN officials were kept in prison. On 5 June 1981, the same day that the PZPR Central Committee received a stern letter from the Soviet authorities, the Polish Supreme Court ruled that Moczulski and his colleagues should be released pending trial. As it turned out, Moczulski remained in

On the question of Moczulski, I said to him: Comrade Kania, you've been bothering with Moczulski for so long, and then you had him under arrest and decided to release him.⁹ Now you're beginning a trial again. What's next?

Next, said Kania, we will try him according to the law and send him again to prison. He will receive what he deserves.

According to Kania, their conferences have now begun to proceed better and in a healthier atmosphere. The influence of the plenum and of the letter from the CPSU CC is evident. In particular, the party conference in Krakow passed off well.

They also will be rectifying the matter of workers' representation at the congress to ensure that the congress is Marxist-Leninist.¹⁰ A course has been adopted toward strengthening discipline in the Party and state institutions and toward bolstering unity.

I said to him that this is very good. Everything that we want to say to you about the situation in Poland and about our alarm over the fate of the PZPR and the cause of socialism — all this is expressed in the letter from the CPSU CC. I see no need to return anew to this. You yourself, no doubt, understand this. I will, I continued, say only one thing: The policy of endless concessions to the counterrevolution has proven utterly bankrupt.¹¹

If you don't succeed in achieving a turnaround in the political situation by the time of the Party Congress, you will ruin both the congress and the Party itself, giving power with your own hands to the enemy. That's where matters stand now. And it's time, finally, for you to understand that. I say this to you as a comrade.

Kania fully agreed with this.

prison for the next two years despite not having been convicted of anything. In October 1982 he and three other KPN leaders were finally convicted of having sought to overthrow the Communist system by force and were sentenced to seven years in prison.

⁹ Translator's Note: Brezhnev is referring here to the provision in the Gdansk accord requiring the release of Moczulski and other dissidents who had been arrested during the strikes.

¹⁰ Translator's Note: The reluctance of blue-collar workers to seek election as delegates to the Ninth Party Congress had caused dismay within the PZPR. The vast majority of workers were pinning their hopes on Solidarity rather than the Party, and thus they eschewed all activities connected with the PZPR. When it turned out that only 20 percent (393 of 1,964) of the delegates to the Congress were blue-collar workers, PZPR officials called for new steps to ensure that workers would no longer "feel like strangers in the Party's ranks." See "Nie ma partii robotniczej bez wladzy robotnikow," *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), 26 June 1981, p. 3.

¹¹ Translator's Note: This message was reiterated over the next few days in the Soviet press. On 21 June, the main Soviet military newspaper, *Krasnaya zvezda*, featured a lengthy article by Marshal Kulikov ("Obuzdat' sily agressii," p. 2), which cited the CPSU Central Committee letter and reaffirmed the Warsaw Pact's determination to suppress "counterrevolutionary forces in Poland who are striving to tear this country out of the socialist commonwealth." Two days later, the CPSU daily *Pravda* carried a TASS dispatch ("Otchetno-vybournaya kompaniya v PORP," p. 4) warning that any change in "Poland's status as a socialist country" would endanger "the security of [the USSR's] borders and the independence and sovereignty of the Polish People's Republic."

I then said to him the following: At the plenum there was no shortage of proper words. There were many such words in the plenum's resolution, too. However, the main thing now is not words, but action and practical work. You yourself, Stanislaw, declared that you must begin acting right away, beginning the very next day.¹² Let's see what will come of this. It was time for you to take action long ago.

In my view, I said to him, an important question has arisen in connection with the plenum. There were, according to what I was told, many speeches there at various levels expressing criticism of the Politburo for its indecisiveness in the struggle against antisocialist forces. Was this so, I ask?

It was, Leonid Il'ich, Kania answers. There was very serious criticism.

Well, now, Comrade Kania, this is a serious symptom that evidently reflects the mood of a substantial portion of the Party membership, and it would be exceedingly dangerous if someone or other on this basis were to try to settle personal scores.

With the congress so near, I said, it's especially important to maintain the combat readiness of the Politburo as a collective entity, which serves as the headquarters of the party and which operates on the basis of Marxist-Leninist principles. That's what I wanted to say to you in response. It's necessary to preserve unity within the Politburo. And then, I again repeat to you, it would be very dangerous if someone on this basis were to try to settle personal accounts.¹³

¹² Translator's Note: Fittingly enough, the Polish authorities did take an important step the day after this CPSU Politburo meeting. On 19 June, Jaruzelski convened a meeting of the KOK to review legislation and other items that had been compiled over the previous few months, including drafts of directives for "the protection of state security and public order," regulations for a legal system under martial law, parliamentary resolutions, State Council decrees, and a number of press releases and public announcements. The Committee approved the drafts and ordered further work to be done, which was largely completed by the end of August. The KOK also affirmed its "normative-organizational" readiness to impose martial law within 48 hours after the final political decision was made. See "Protokol z posiedzenia Komitetu Obrony Kraju w dniu 19.6.1981," 19 June 1981 (Top Secret), in CAW, Teczka Sygn. 38.

¹³ Translator's Note: The phrase "settling of accounts" (*rozliczenie*) was used frequently within the PZPR in late 1980 and 1981 to refer to the need for reprisals against the former Gierek regime and against officials responsible for violent crackdowns in June 1956, March 1968, and December 1970 (see the ninth annotation in Transcript of the CPSU Politburo Session, 22 January 1981). In this case, however, Brezhnev is referring to the possibility of a broader settling of accounts at the PZPR's Extraordinary Ninth Congress in mid-July. The Soviet leader was concerned that Kania might retaliate against Grabski and others who had tried to oust him at the recently-concluded Central Committee plenum. Brezhnev's insistence that "unity within the [PZPR] Politburo must be preserved"—an ironic position considering that the CPSU Central Committee's own letter had heightened the disunity among top Polish officials—was a signal to Kania that he should not seek to punish (or even remove) his hard-line critics. The same point was made by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko during a visit to Warsaw in early July 1981. Gromyko reported that "during the talks in Warsaw [he] warned Kania not to choose the path of revenge against comrades who, at Central Committee plenums and on other occasions, criticized the current PZPR leadership's tendency to make endless concessions to the anti-socialist forces." Quoted from "Information uber Gesprache des Mitgliedes des Politburos des ZK der KPdSU, Ministers fur Auswartige Angelegenheiten der UdSSR, Gen. A. A. Gromyko mit der Fuhung der PVAP in Warschau am 3.-5. Juli

At that point Kania said: "Leonid Il'ich, I don't fully understand what you mean."

Once again I repeated to him, using the same words, that it would be unacceptable to settle personal accounts. After that, Kania said he understood and had made note of it, and he said they all would act according to what he had been told.

Kania assured me that he would do everything in his power to fulfill our wishes, to which I replied: Time will tell. On that note we said goodbye.

As you see, the discussion did not take very long, but it was long on content. No doubt that was necessary. Let the comrades think it over. I think on one thing Kania is right, namely, that the letter from the CPSU CC positively influenced the healthy forces in the Party and brought a certain improvement in the whole atmosphere. Perhaps in the end they will think things over and begin to act more decisively. As they say, we shall see.

Do the comrades have any sorts of questions or comments? If not, let's approve this discussion.

EVERYONE. Agreed.

[Source: *TsKhSD, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 44*]

1981," 10 July 1981 (Top Secret), in SAPDMB, ZPA, DY 30/J IV 2/202/550, Bl. 35. In the end, Kania largely complied with Brezhnev's and Gromyko's wishes, despite the upheaval caused by the PZPR's new election procedures. The PZPR Politburo experienced a huge turnover at the Congress (only 4 of 15 members were retained) and two prominent hard-liners (Grabski and Andrzej Zabinski) were dismissed, but Stefan Olszowski (another notorious hard-liner) retained his post; and the new Politburo, as proposed by Kania and approved by the Central Committee, included two additional hard-liners: Mirosław Milewski and Albin Siwak. (Siwak, in particular, had been an ultra hard-line critic of Kania's leadership.) Moreover, two key moderates on the earlier Politburo, Tadeusz Fiszbach and Mieczysław Jagielski, were among those who lost their jobs. On balance, then, the composition of the new PZPR Politburo, from Moscow's perspective, was no worse—and in many respects better—than it had been previously.