

INFORMATION ABOUT Cde. L. I. BREZHNEV'S TELEPHONE
CONVERSATION WITH Cde. S. KANIA¹

“Hello, Stanislaw! They told me that you want to speak with me. Please go ahead.”

(After S. Kania's information)²

“I listened to your remarks. It seems to me that you're still under the sway of certain illusions.

“I discussed the situation in Poland with you and Wojciech in the Crimea roughly a month ago. At that point there was already more than enough basis for disquiet. Since then, in our view, the situation has become even more alarming. I'll say this candidly: you should wake up again and think about who is controlling the situation in Poland. Has the fulcrum of power there already changed? The leaders of Solidarity are acting so brazenly that you cannot help but ask yourself this question.

“Solidarity's congress and the whole atmosphere around it attest that Solidarity openly aspires to the role of a political party, a party with an anti-Communist bent.³ The results of the first round of the Congress, in our view, amounted to a declaration of war against the PZPR and the socialist regime.

“Of course this in no way was a congress of workers. Even according to Solidarity's own information, only 25 percent of the delegates were workers. More than a quarter of the delegates were representatives of the counterrevolutionary organizations KSS-KOR and Confederation for an Independent Poland. And it was not the interests of the working class that preoccupied the participants in this gathering. Instead they focused on how to humiliate the PZPR and the government and force them to their knees.

“At the Congress, as you know, the question was raised about possibly removing from Solidarity's statutes the provisions about the leading role of the party and

¹ Translator's Note: This document from the former East German party archives provides only Brezhnev's side of the conversation, which took place on 11 September 1981. For informational purposes, the transcript of Brezhnev's remarks was distributed to Erich Honecker and other East European leaders. Presumably, a full transcript of the conversation (with Kania's comments included) exists in the Russian Presidential Archive, but if so, it has not yet been released. The document given to Honecker is undated, but a handwritten notation by the East German leader in the upper right-hand corner of the first page gives the date of 15 September 1981. For Kania's recollection of this phone conversation, see Kania, *Zatrzymac konfrontacje* (Warsaw: BGW, 1992), pp. 221-224.

² Translator's Note: This appears in the original.

³ Translator's Note: The first phase of Solidarity's Congress had been adjourned a few days earlier, on 10 September.

recognition of Poland's international alliances.⁴ These are provisions in your Constitution. This means that attacks have begun against the constitutional bases of society.

“Solidarity has decided not to confine itself solely to Poland. It is attempting to impose its subversive ideas on neighboring states and to interfere in their internal affairs. That's the only way one can view the 'Appeal to the Peoples of Eastern Europe,' which was adopted by Solidarity's Congress.⁵ There aren't many words in that document, but they all make the same point. The authors of the document would like to foment disturbances in the socialist countries and stir up groups of various renegades. I don't know what you've decided to do about this provocative escapade, but we believe it is essential to give it the rebuff it deserves.

“Solidarity is not limiting itself to slogans and appeals. It is in fact making preparations, including military preparations, to seize power. According to reports filtering in from the West, Solidarity is creating 'combat groups,' whose task is to terrorize Communists and patriots.⁶ This is just what fascists do in creating brigades of stormtroopers. According to the same reports, Solidarity is initiating courses for new draftees in the Polish Army. How can this be tolerated? If fresh troops come in imbued with anti-socialist and anti-Soviet preconceptions, you might quickly find that the army disintegrates.⁷

⁴ Translator's Note: These provisions, which had been included in the Gdansk accords, were among the chief issues at stake during the two-week "registration crisis" in late October and early November 1980. (For background, see my annotation in Transcript of the CPSU Politburo Session, 29 October 1980.) Under the Polish Supreme Court's ruling of 10 November 1980, the two provisions were included in an appendix to Solidarity's statutes. No final decision was made during the first round of Solidarity's Congress (in September 1981) on whether to amend the statutes by deleting the provisions in the appendix.

⁵ Translator's Note: This again is a reference to “Poslanie do ludzi pracy w Europie Wschodniej,” *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* (Warsaw), No. 25 (18 September 1981), p. 6. See my first annotation in Transcript of the CPSU Politburo Session, 10 September 1981.

⁶ Translator's Note: A senior U.S. intelligence official who was responsible for tracking the Soviet Union and Poland in 1980-81 (and who later became director of the CIA), Robert Gates, disclosed in his memoirs that as early as April 1981 the "CIA learned . . . that the [Polish] regime [had] received information that Solidarity 'extremist elements' had begun to prepare for a violent confrontation with the government—preparing Molotov cocktails and planning the occupation of government buildings and destruction of Communist Party offices around the country." See Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 232. It turned out, however, that almost all the information the PZPR had received was fabricated by hardliners at the Polish MSW. During the martial law crackdown in December 1981, only two people were arrested for possessing illegal firearms. General Kiszczak urged his subordinates to "exploit this arrest immediately for propaganda purposes, perhaps by featuring it in the next edition of the television news." Similarly, on 13 December 1981, the first day under martial, Jaruzelski told the PZPR Politburo that "we must demonstrate that our decisions were right. By exploiting the materials we seized, we should underscore what we managed to avoid—a mortal danger was averted at the last moment." Despite these exhortations, no armed resistance groups were found to exist. For Kiszczak's comments, see "Posiedzenie Kierownictwa MSW, 17.XII.1981 r.," in CAMSW, Sygn. 251/1; for Jaruzelski's remarks, see "Protokol Nr. 19 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR w dniu 13.XII.1981 r.," Ss. 8-9.

⁷ Translator's Note: Soviet concern about the potential unreliability of the Polish army had existed since the fall of 1980, but those concerns grew as the time for the induction of new draftees approached. Brezhnev's statement provides important evidence that Soviet leaders urged Kania and Jaruzelski to defer the call-up until after martial law had been imposed. Jaruzelski heeded this suggestion in late October 1981, when he

“One position after another is being transferred to Solidarity's control. The legitimately appointed directors of enterprises are being removed without any prior arrangement. Solidarity is calling the shots at more than half of the large factories and is creating there what it calls 'organs of self-management.’⁸

“In rural areas there have been instances of the unauthorized seizure of state and cooperative farmland by private peasants.⁹ Solidarity reacted viciously when the mass media featured criticism of its actions, and they are now seeking to take complete control of the media.

“It is painful to speak about the frenzy of anti-Sovietism that has now engulfed Poland. How can you let this go unpunished? How can you tolerate instances of psychological and physical terror against Communists and all others who want to work honestly? As an ultimatum, the opposition continually demands that the elections to the Sejm and the People's Councils be moved up.¹⁰ Their ultimate goal is, through 'peaceful means,' to destroy the economic and political foundations of the socialist order.

“I will not refer to many other things, which are no less alarming. These things must be at least as well known to you as they are to us. It is understandable why at the recent plenums, including the third, many members of the newly formed Central Committee were speaking with great alarm about the situation.¹¹ They demanded not only bold words but decisive actions from the PZPR leadership.

“Their concerns are understandable. The impudent leaders of Solidarity openly declare that their organization is already the leading force in society.

“In general, everything suggests that the counterrevolution is seizing power from the PZPR.

“In the Crimea, you, Stanislaw, and Jaruzelski said that 'you are constantly

extended the term of duty of existing conscripts by two months, until late December 1981. That was long enough for the martial law operation to be implemented without any fresh recruits.

⁸ Translator's Note: This statement is largely accurate, though the process at this stage was still quite rudimentary. Under a compromise worked out by the government and Solidarity over the next several weeks, the workers' councils at most enterprises were given a much greater role in their own firms' management.

⁹ Translator's Note: The Russian word *edinolichniki* is translated here as "private peasants," but if applied to the Soviet Union it would be better translated as "individual peasants." In Poland the overwhelming share of agriculture had been private since 1956, whereas in the Soviet Union there was no private farming aside from minuscule private plots permitted for individuals.

¹⁰ Translator's Note: See my annotation about Solidarity's electoral demands in Notes from Brezhnev's Meeting with Stanislaw Kania and Wojciech Jaruzelski, 22 August 1981..

¹¹ Translator's Note: Brezhnev is referring here to two recent plenums of the PZPR Central Committee that followed the 9th PZPR Congress: the 2nd Plenum on 11-12 August 1981 and the 3rd Plenum on 2-3 September.

determined to use the most decisive measures against the counterrevolution.¹² But just where are these measures?

“You also said that you have an appropriate plan to introduce emergency or military rule. When will even a part of this plan finally be implemented?”¹³

“The growing activity and energy of the anti-socialist forces in the country are in stark contrast to the way the leaders of the party and government are behaving. How can you permit this?

“We request that you inform us, the leadership of a fraternal party, the CPSU, what you intend to do.

“In practical terms, we have nothing to add to the recommendations we already provided to you about how to get out of the crisis, including the recommendations in the letter of 5 June and during the meeting in the Crimea on 14 August.¹⁴ These recommendations and advice remain in force.

“Both then and now we have been convinced that if you do nothing to offset the appeals of the insolent Solidarity, you will open the way to counterrevolution.¹⁵ In our view, it is essential not to delay any further in gearing up the party for a decisive and uncompromising struggle against the counterrevolution. And when the very fate of socialism is at stake, you can't limit yourself to only one form or another of struggle.

“I believe it is important to emphasize, once again, that in today's complicated world situation, the course of events in Poland is forcing the socialist commonwealth to confront the ever thornier question of how to maintain security in the center of Europe. If Poland is ruled by Solidarity, who will guarantee the inviolability of the commonwealth's vital lines of communication that pass through the PPR, including strategic lines of communication?”¹⁶ How could we, the participants in the Warsaw Pact, ensure the

¹² Translator's Note: Brezhnev is referring to the meetings he had with Kania and Jaruzelski in Crimea on 14 August 1981. See Notes from Brezhnev's Meeting with Stanislaw Kania and Wojciech Jaruzelski, 22 August 1981.

¹³ Translator's Note: On 13 September, just two days after this phone conversation, Jaruzelski convened a fateful meeting of Poland's Homeland Defense Committee. The KOK, chaired by Jaruzelski, voted to approve the plans for martial law, though it did not set a specific date. Handwritten notes from that meeting, compiled by General Tadeusz Tuczapski, the secretary of KOK, were recently unearthed at the Polish military archive. See "Protokol No. 002/81 posiedzenia Komitetu Obrony Kraju z dnia wrzesnia 1981 r." 13 September 1981, in Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW), Materiały z posiedzen KOK, Teczka Sygn. 48. These notes are the only official record of the meeting. All other participants were prohibited from taking notes.

¹⁴ Translator's Note: See Transcript of the CPSU Politburo Session, 18 June 1981 and Notes from Brezhnev's Meeting with Stanislaw Kania and Wojciech Jaruzelski, 22 August 1981.

¹⁵ Translator's Note: On 16 September, less than a week after this CPSU Politburo meeting, the PZPR Politburo approved a statement denouncing Solidarity's Congress. The statement was adapted for the official Polish press, which published it the following day. See "Oswiadczenie Biura Politycznego KC PZPR z 16 wrzesnia 1981 r.," 16 September 1981 (Secret), in CAMSW, Sygn. 228/16, Ss. 0034-0036.

¹⁶ Translator's Note: Brezhnev's comments here and in the next paragraph, reflecting vehement alarm at the prospect that Solidarity might come to power in Poland, shed interesting light on statements by Yuri

preservation of the results of the Second World War, which were codified in well-known political and international legal documents?¹⁷

“I want to emphasize, once again, Stanislaw, that the fate of socialism in Poland and the outcome of the political struggle in your country profoundly affect all the fraternal countries.

“In the emerging situation, on behalf of our Politburo, I request that the PZPR CC leadership respond to us about the matters I have raised, so that we can have a clear idea about your plan of action at least for the near future.

“What you have said is of definite interest [to me], but it does not change the general picture. I request that you pay greater heed to what I have reported to you today.”¹⁸

[Source: SAPMDB, ZPA, J IV 2/202-550]

Andropov at the 10 December 1981 meeting of the CPSU Politburo, translated in Transcript of the CPSU Politburo Session, 10 December 1981. At that meeting, Andropov claimed that the Soviet Union must "not send in troops . . . even if Poland falls under the control of Solidarity." At the same time, Andropov did concede that the Soviet Union had to "do something to protect the lines of communication between the USSR and the GDR." Brezhnev, for his part, seemed to have little doubt that the lines of communication could not be safeguarded if Solidarity came to power. Hence, Andropov's statement may not be as much of an anomaly as it seems. So long as no final decision had to be taken, it was relatively easy to talk in the abstract about what the Soviet Union might do if Solidarity took power.

¹⁷ Translator's Note: Brezhnev is referring here to bilateral Soviet-Polish agreements, the series of treaties concerning the two German states that were concluded in the early 1970s, and the Helsinki Accords (the Final Act on Security and Cooperation in Europe) signed in 1975.

¹⁸ Translator's Note: On this note, the document ends.