

SESSION OF THE CPSU CC POLITBURO

12 March 1981

Cde. L. I. BREZHNEV presiding.

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

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5. On the Discussion Between Cde. L. I. Brezhnev and Cde. E. Honecker

BREZHNEV. Notes from the discussion with Cde. Honecker were distributed, and you've had a chance to read them. The discussion was brief, but for Cde. Honecker it had great significance. I started out by welcoming Cde. Honecker and thanking him for taking part in the congress.¹ In addition, I sought Cde. Honecker's views on how the congress was going and how the delegates were receiving it. He responded that the delegates to the congress are speaking about many things, referring not only to successes, but also to difficulties and shortcomings.

In addition, Cde. Honecker's alarm at the situation in Poland was very much in evidence during the conversation. I said to him that the situation in Poland disturbs us, too. I noted that Cde. Honecker had had a meeting with Cde. Kania, which of course was useful.² All of us clearly are united in believing that the Polish comrades must begin

¹ Translator's Note: Brezhnev is referring here to the CPSU's 26th Congress, which had recently taken place in Moscow. All the East European leaders attended the congress, and Brezhnev held a brief one-on-one discussion with each of them. See Honecker's handwritten notes about his meeting with Brezhnev, dated 9 March 1981, in SAPMDB, ZPA, J IV 2/202-550; reproduced in Kubina and Wilke, eds., *"Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen"*, pp. 254-255.

² Translator's Note: Brezhnev is referring to a meeting that Honecker had with Kania in Hubertusstock, the official East German guest house, on 17 February 1981. For detailed East German accounts of this meeting, one by the SED International Department and the other by Honecker, see "Ausserungen der Genossen E. Honecker und St. Kania waehrend der Fahrt am 17.2.1981 nach und von Hubertusstock," 18 February 1981 (Top Secret), and "Niederschrift ueber das Gesprach des Generalsekretars des ZK der SED und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Genossen Erich Honecker, mit dem Ersten Sekretar des ZK der PVAP, Genossen Stanislaw Kania, am 17. Februar 1981 in Hubertusstock," 17 February 1981 (Top Secret), both in SAPMDB, ZPA, J IV 2/2/A-2384, which are reproduced in Kubina and Wilke, *"Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen"*, pp. 221-227 and 227-250, respectively. Kania presented a brief summary of

taking more forceful measures to restore order in the country and to provide stability. The government is now headed by Cde. Jaruzelski — a good, intelligent comrade who wields great authority.³

I said that Cde. Honecker, during his meeting with Cde. Kania, should also insist that the Polish comrades resort to more decisive measures aimed at restoring order in the country. Cde. Honecker thanked me for the discussion and expressed his eagerness for me to lead a CPSU delegation to the congress. I thanked him for the invitation and said that the Politburo would be deciding who would lead the delegation.⁴

GROMYKO. Poland, of course, is of concern to everyone, above all Cde. Honecker. That's fully understandable. It seems to me that Honecker was right in being firm when he raised all the matters with Kania, and that Cde. Husak also very firmly raised all these matters.⁵

RUSAKOV. If we refer to the discussions that Leonid Il'ich had, it's evident that the question of Poland was raised by all the comrades.⁶ Of course everyone is worried about the situation in Poland. I think these concerns are shared by the Polish comrades. They must address these concerns by adopting more decisive measures. However, even after

the meeting to the PZPR Politburo on 18 February; see "Protokol Nr. 74 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 18 lutego 1980 r.," 18 February 1981 (Secret), reprinted in Wlodek, ed., *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, pp. 275-278, esp. 277-278.

³ Translator's Note: Jaruzelski had taken over as prime minister a month earlier, replacing Jozef Pinkowski on 12 February. Under the Polish constitution, this new appointment entitled Jaruzelski to serve as chairman of the Homeland Defense Committee (*Komitet obrony kraju*, or KOK), a powerful body of which he, as national defense minister, had long been deputy chairman. (Jaruzelski retained the national defense portfolio even after he became prime minister, and thus he held both of KOK's top posts.) As the head of government, Jaruzelski attended the 26th Soviet Party Congress along with Kania, and he met on 3 March with Soviet prime minister Nikolai Tikhonov. The ostensible purpose of the meeting (as outlined in a brief press communique) was to discuss bilateral relations and "common tasks." The real purpose of the meeting, however, was to give Jaruzelski an opportunity to brief Tikhonov and other Soviet officials on a "Report About the Status of the Country's Preparations for the Introduction of Martial Law" (*Informacja o stanie przygotowan państwa do wprowadzenia stanu wojennego*). Jaruzelski assured Tikhonov that the Polish authorities were "determined to resort to this measure [martial law] to defend the homeland against counterrevolution." The nature of the Jaruzelski-Tikhonov meeting was first disclosed by Ryszard Kuklinski in "Wojna z narodem widziana od srodka," pp. 29-30. See also Jaruzelski, *Les chaines et le refuge*, pp. 247-248; and Jaruzelski, *Stan wojenny dlaczego*, pp. 52-53. Kania met with Brezhnev on the same day, as described in his *Zatrzymac konfrontacje*, pp. 114-117.

⁴ Translator's Note: The reference here is to the SED's upcoming Tenth Congress, scheduled for 11-14 April 1981. In an earlier portion of this CPSU Politburo meeting (a portion not translated here), Brezhnev had indicated that it "would be too difficult [for him] to lead delegations to all the congresses" in Eastern Europe in 1981, so he decided to go to only one—the Sixteenth Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which was due to be held from 6 to 10 April. The Soviet Politburo quickly endorsed this decision. Hence, Brezhnev's reply to Honecker was tantamount to a polite brush-off. The Soviet delegation to the East German party congress was instead headed by Mikhail Suslov.

⁵ Translator's Note: Gustav Husak met with Kania in Prague on 15 February, two days before Kania's discussions with Honecker. The Polish leader presented a summary of his talks with Husak at the same meeting of the PZPR Politburo on 18 February, as cited above.

⁶ Translator's Note: The very cursory summaries of Brezhnev's other bilateral discussions during the 26th CPSU Congress (with Kadar, Zhivkov, etc.), as provided in earlier sections of this transcript, do not refer explicitly to the situation in Poland.

the highly publicized conference of the leaders of the fraternal countries, the Polish friends still have not grasped the necessity of carrying out fundamental measures to restore order in the country.⁷

This same question was addressed by Cdes. Chernenko, Gorbachev, and Grishin.

A decision was adopted to approve the discussion held by Cde. L. I. Brezhnev with Cde. E. Honecker.

[*Source: TsKhSD, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 37*]

⁷ Translator's Note: Rusakov is referring to the meeting on 5 December 1980 of the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee (see Transcript of the CPSU Politburo Session, 11 December 1980), which Soviet and East European leaders had hoped would spur the Polish authorities to take stronger action.