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Session of the CPSU CC Politburo

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Summary:

The Soviet Politburo discusses the Polish Solidarity movement and the possibility of imposing martial law in Poland to restore order and the communist party's authority.

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SESSION OF THE CPSU CC POLITBURO

10 December 1981

Presided over by Comrade L. I. BREZHNEV.

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

I. On the question of the situation in Poland

BREZHNEV. This question is not listed on our agenda. But I think that the session of the Politburo should begin with this matter, since we have specially dispatched Comrades [Head of Gosplan Nikolai] Baibakov and [Warsaw Pact Commander-in-Chief Marshal Viktor] Kulikov to Poland to meet with the Polish comrades and go over certain matters of the utmost urgency. On 8 December, Comrade Kulikov provided us with information about the discussions he held in Warsaw, and yesterday, 9 December, Comrade Baibakov communicated from Warsaw that he had held a discussion with Comrade Jaruzelski. From these meetings and subsequent discussions held by Comrade Baibakov, it is apparent that the Polish comrades hope to receive roughly 1.5 billion dollars' worth of additional supplies and materials from the USSR and other socialist countries in the first quarter of the coming year.¹ This will include iron ore, non-ferrous metals, fertilizer, oil, tires, grain, etc.

In making this request, as you see, the Polish comrades have in mind that shipments of goods from the USSR to Poland in 1982 will be maintained at the level of 1981. Comrade Baibakov assured his interlocutors that all their requests would be considered in Moscow.

Perhaps it would behoove us now to instruct Comrades Tikhonov, Kirilenko, Dolgikh, Skachkov, and Arkhipov to continue studying this matter, taking account of the exchange of opinions, but without waiting for a final agreement.

And now let's hear what Comrade Baibakov has to say.

BAIBAKOV. In accordance with the Politburo's instructions, I traveled to Warsaw. I met there with all the comrades whom it was necessary for me to see about the matters specified in my instructions.

First of all I had a discussion with the deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers, Comrade Obodowski. During this discussion, the Polish comrades raised the question of economic assistance. I sent an encrypted cable back here outlining the Polish request.

One must say that the list of goods included in the assistance from us to the PPR

comes to 350 items worth some 1.4 billion rubles. This includes such goods as 2 million tons of grains, 25 thousand tons of meat, 625 thousand tons of iron ore, and many other goods. The requests made by the Polish comrades, combined with what we had already been thinking about giving Poland in 1982, means that the total assistance to the Polish People's Republic will be approximately 4.4 billion rubles.

The time is now approaching when Poland will have to pay for its credits from West European countries. For this, Poland will be required to pay a minimum of 2.8 million rubles' worth of hard currency. When I was told by the Polish comrades that they are requesting the amount that all this assistance comes to, I raised the question of how to establish mutual economic ties on a balanced basis. Moreover, I noticed that Polish industry is not even coming close to fulfilling its plan. The coal industry, which is the country's basic means of earning hard currency, has been severely disrupted, and remedial measures have not been implemented as strikes continue. And even now, when there are no strikes, the mining of coal remains at a very low level.

Or, for example, let's say that production is going on among the peasantry, with grain, meat products, vegetables, etc. But they aren't giving any of it to the state; they're just playing a waiting game. At the private markets the level of agricultural trade is sufficiently high and is being carried out at very inflated prices.

I said directly to the Polish comrades that they must adopt more decisive measures if such a situation has arisen. Perhaps they can launch something in the nature of a requisitioning of farm produce.²

If we speak, for example, about reserves of grain, then Poland this year has accumulated more than 2 million tons. The population is not going hungry. Urban dwellers ride out to the markets and buy up all the products they need. And there are ample supplies of them.

As is known, by the Politburo's decision and at the request of the Polish comrades, we are providing Poland with an aid shipment of 30 thousand tons of meat. Of these promised 30 thousand tons, 15 thousand have already been shipped abroad. It should be added that the produce, in this case meat, is being delivered in dirty, unsanitary freight cars normally used to transport iron ore, making for an unpleasant sight. During the transport of this produce to the Polish stations, genuine sabotage has been taking place. Poles have been expressing highly obscene comments about the Soviet Union and the Soviet people, have refused to clean out the freight cars, etc. One couldn't even begin to keep count of all the insults that have been directed against us.

Viewing the situation from the standpoint of the balance of payments, the Poles want to introduce a moratorium on the payment of their debt to Western countries. If they declare a moratorium, then all Polish vessels in the waters of other states or in harbor, and all other Polish property in the countries to which Poland owes debts, will be seized. For this reason the Poles have given instructions to the captains of ships to refrain from entering ports and to stay in neutral waters.

Now I will offer several words about my discussion with Comrade Jaruzelski. He reaffirmed the request made earlier by Obodowski regarding the delivery of goods. Then in the evening I again went to Jaruzelski's office, accompanied by our ambassador and Comrade Kulikov. Also taking part in this discussion were Obodowski and the PZPR CC secretary who handles these matters. Jaruzelski was in a highly agitated state. It seemed that he had been deeply disturbed by the letter from the head of the Polish Catholic Church, Archbishop Glemp, who, as is known, promised to declare a holy war against the Polish authorities. True, Jaruzelski promptly responded that in the event of untoward activities by "Solidarity," they will detain all hostile elements.

As far as the party organizations are concerned, they are ruined and inactive in the outlying regions. And with regard to the party as a whole, Jaruzelski said that in essence it no longer exists. The country is being destroyed, and the outlying regions are not receiving any sort of reinforcement, because the Central Committee and government are not giving firm and clear-cut instructions. Jaruzelski himself has been transformed into a man who is extremely neurotic and diffident about his abilities.

RUSAKOV. Comrade Baibakov has correctly described the situation regarding the Polish economy. What, then, should we be doing now? It seems to me that we should deliver to Poland the goods provided for under the economic agreements, but that these deliveries should not exceed the quantity of goods we delivered in the first quarter of last year.

BREZHNEV. And are we able to give this much now?

BAIBAKOV. Leonid Ilyich, it can be given only by drawing on state reserves or at the expense of deliveries to the internal market.

RUSAKOV. The day before yesterday they had a conference of secretaries from the provincial committees. As Comrade Aristov³ reported, the secretaries of the provincial committees are completely baffled by Jaruzelski's speech, which did not present a clear, straightforward line. No one knows what will happen over the next few days. There was a conversation about "Operation X." At first, they said it would be on the night of 11-12 December, and then this was changed to the night of 12-13. And now they're already saying it won't be until around the 20th. What is envisaged is that the chairman of the State Council, Jablonski, will appear on radio and television and declare the introduction of martial law. At the same time, Jaruzelski said that the law on the introduction of martial law can be implemented only after it is considered by the Sejm, and the next session of the Sejm is not scheduled until 15 December. Thus, everything has become very complicated. The agenda of the Sejm has already been published, and it makes no mention of the introduction of martial law. But even if the government does intend to introduce martial law, "Solidarity" knows this very well and, for its part, has been preparing all necessary measures to cope with that.

Jaruzelski himself says that he intends to deliver an address to the Polish nation. But in his address he won't be speaking about the party. Instead he will appeal to Polish nationalist sentiments. Jaruzelski has talked about the need to proclaim a military dictatorship, of the sort that existed under Pilsudski.⁴ He indicated that the Poles will accept this more readily than something else.

As far as officials like Olszowski are concerned, they recently have begun to act more decisively; and one might add that at the session of the Politburo where the decision was made to introduce martial law and adopt more resolute measures against extremist figures in "Solidarity," the vote was unanimous and no one expressed a word of opposition.⁵ At the same time, Jaruzelski intends to keep in close touch about this matter with his allies. He says that if the Polish forces are unable to cope with the resistance put up by "Solidarity," the Polish comrades hope to receive assistance from other countries, up to and including the introduction of armed forces on the territory of Poland. Jaruzelski is basing this hope on the speech by Comrade Kulikov, who reportedly said that the USSR and other socialist countries would indeed give assistance to Poland with their armed forces. However, as far as I know, Comrade Kulikov did not say this directly, but merely repeated the words voiced earlier by L. I. Brezhnev about our determination not to leave Poland in the lurch.

If we consider what is going on in the provinces, one must candidly say that the strength of the party organizations there has been completely dissipated. To a certain degree the administrative apparatus there is still functioning, but in effect all power has now been transferred to the hands of "Solidarity." In his recent statements,

Jaruzelski is apparently trying to pull the wool over our eyes, because his words fail to reflect a proper analysis. If the Polish comrades don't quickly get organized, prepare themselves, and resist the onslaught of "Solidarity," they will have no success at all in improving the situation in Poland.

ANDROPOV. From the discussions with Jaruzelski it's clear that they have not yet reached a firm consensus about the introduction of martial law. Despite the unanimous vote by the PZPR CC Politburo on the need to introduce martial law, we still haven't seen concrete measures on the part of the leadership. The extremists in "Solidarity" are attacking the Polish leadership by the throat. The Church in recent days has also clearly expressed its position, which in essence is now completely supportive of "Solidarity."

Of course in these circumstances the Polish comrades must act swiftly in launching "Operation X" and carrying it out. At the same time, Jaruzelski declares that we will resort to "Operation X" when "Solidarity" forces us to do so. This is a very disturbing sign, particularly because the latest session of the PZPR CC Politburo and the decision it adopted to introduce martial law had suggested that the Politburo was beginning to act more decisively. All the members of the Politburo expressed support for decisive action. This decision put pressure on Jaruzelski, and he is now compelled to find some way of extricating himself. Yesterday I spoke with Milewski and asked him what measures they intended and when it would be done. He replied that he simply doesn't know about "Operation X" and about the concrete timeframe in which it would be carried out. Thus, it would seem that either Jaruzelski is concealing from his comrades the plan of concrete action, or he is simply abandoning the idea of carrying out this step.

I'd now like to mention that Jaruzelski has been more than persistent in setting forth economic demands from us and has made the implementation of "Operation X" contingent on our willingness to offer economic assistance; and I would say even more than that, he is raising the question, albeit indirectly, of receiving military assistance as well.

Now, if you look at the list of goods we are providing to the Polish comrades, we can candidly say that serious doubts arise about the necessity of supplying these products. For example, what is the connection between the success of "Operation X" and the delivery of fertilizer and certain other goods? In connection with this I would say that our position, as it was formulated earlier during the previous session of the Politburo and was expressed even earlier on several occasions by Leonid Ilyich, is entirely correct, and we must not depart from it at all.⁶ In other words, we support the position of internationalist assistance, and we are alarmed by the situation unfolding in Poland; but as far as "Operation X" is concerned, that must entirely and unequivocally be decided by the Polish comrades themselves. Whatever they decide is what will be. We will not insist on any specific course, and we will not dissuade them from pursuing what they decide.

As far as economic assistance is concerned, it will of course be difficult for us to undertake anything of the scale and nature of what has been proposed. No doubt, something will have to give. But again I want to say that the mere posing of the question of the apportionment of goods supplied as economic assistance is an insolent way to approach things, and it is being done purely so that if we refrain from delivering something or other, they'll be able to lay all the blame on us. If Comrade Kulikov actually did speak about the introduction of troops, then I believe he did this incorrectly. We can't risk such a step. We don't intend to introduce troops into Poland. That is the proper position, and we must adhere to it until the end. I don't know how things will turn out in Poland, but even if Poland falls under the control of "Solidarity," that's the way it will be. And if the capitalist countries pounce on the Soviet Union, and you know they have already reached agreement on a variety of economic and political sanctions, that will be very burdensome for us. We must be concerned above

all with our own country and about the strengthening of the Soviet Union. That is our main line.

In general, it seems to me that our position on the situation in Poland was formulated by Leonid Ilyich in several of his speeches and in the resolutions adopted earlier. Today, a very thorough exchange of opinions has taken place during the session of the Politburo. All of this must serve as the basis of the policy we must uphold vis-a-vis Poland.

As concerns the lines of communication between the Soviet Union and the GDR that run through Poland, then we of course must do something to provide for their safekeeping.

GROMYKO. Today we've had a very spirited review of the situation in Poland. You might even say this review was more spirited than any we've had before. This is because at the moment we ourselves don't know what direction the events in Poland will take. The Polish leadership itself senses that power is slipping from its grasp. Kania and Jaruzelski, you know, counted on their ability to rely on the neutrals. But now there is no such opportunity, there are no longer any neutrals. The position is defined sufficiently clearly: "Solidarity" has proven to be a patently counterrevolutionary organization which aspires to come to power and which has openly declared its intention to seize power. The Polish leadership must decide the question: Either it relinquishes its positions by failing to adopt decisive measures, or it adopts decisive measures by introducing martial law, isolating the extremists of "Solidarity," and restoring public order. There is no other alternative.

What should our position be toward the Polish events? I fully agree with what was already said here by the comrades. We can say to the Poles that we view the Polish events with understanding. There is no basis whatsoever for us to alter this measured formulation in any way. At the same time we must somehow try to dispel the notions that Jaruzelski and other leaders in Poland have about the introduction of troops. There cannot be any introduction of troops into Poland. I think we can give instructions about this to our ambassador, asking him to visit Jaruzelski and communicate this to him.

Despite the sufficiently unanimous vote of the PZPR CC Politburo with regard to the introduction of martial law, Jaruzelski is now back to his vacillating position. At first he had somewhat stiffened his spine, but now, once again, he's begun to soften. Everything is still in force that was said to them previously. If in the struggle against counterrevolution and afterwards they show any sign of wavering, nothing of socialist Poland will remain. The introduction of martial law, of course, would be the best way to convey the steadfastness of the Polish leadership to the counterrevolutionaries. And if the measures they intend to carry out are indeed implemented, then I think we could expect positive results.

Now, with regard to the creation of a new party, as Jaruzelski proposed, I think we must directly say to Jaruzelski that there is no need to create any sort of new party, since this would merely signal a retreat on the part of the Polish leadership and an acknowledgment that the PZPR is in fact not a militant political organization, but simply an organization that has committed mistakes. It would underscore the very weakness of the party and would play into the hands of the "Solidarity" extremists. Then even the population of Poland, which retains definite sympathy for the PZPR as a guiding force, would be completely disabused of such sentiments.

I believe that we must not now permit any sort of harsh instructions, which would force them to adopt one course or another. I think we have chosen the correct position here: The restoration of order in Poland is a matter for the Polish United Workers' Party, its Central Committee, and its Politburo. We already said to our Polish

friends and will say again in the future that they must pursue a steadfast course without slackening in the least.

Of course, if the Poles deliver a blow to "Solidarity," the West in all likelihood will not give them credits and will not offer any other kind of help. They are aware of this, and this obviously is something that we, too, have to bear in mind. For this reason, Leonid Ilyich was correct in proposing that we instruct a group of comrades to examine this question, taking account of our capabilities to extend substantial economic assistance to the PPR.

USTINOV. The situation in the PPR, of course, is very bad. The situation is worsening day by day. Among the leadership, especially in the Politburo, there is no firmness or unity. And all of this has taken its toll on the state of affairs. Only at the last session of the [Polish] Politburo was a decision unanimously approved to introduce martial law. And now all hopes are riding on Jaruzelski. How will he succeed in carrying out this decision? As yet, no one can openly speak about the actions of Jaruzelski. We just don't know. I had a conversation with Siwicki. He candidly said that even we [the Poles] don't know what the general is thinking. Thus, the man who has been effectively responsible for discharging the duties of the Polish defense minister doesn't know what will happen and what sort of actions will be taken by the chairman of the Council of Ministers and minister.

With regard to what Comrade Kulikov allegedly said about the introduction of troops into Poland, I can say in full responsibility that Kulikov never said this. He simply repeated what was said by us and by Leonid Ilyich that we would not leave Poland in the lurch. And he perfectly well knows that the Poles themselves requested us not to introduce troops.

As far as our garrisons in Poland are concerned, we are fortifying them. I myself am also inclined to think that the Poles will not embark on a confrontation and only if, perhaps, "Solidarity" seizes them by the throat will they come forth.

The problem is that the Polish leaders do not appear resolute. As was rightly said here by the comrades, we must not force them to adopt any specific decisions; we will simply carry out the policy on which we have agreed. For our part, we must be ready ourselves and must not display any sort of actions not provided for by our decisions.

SUSLOV. I believe, as is evident from the other comrades' speeches, we all have the same view of the situation in Poland. During the whole prolonged stretch of events in Poland, we have displayed steadfastness and composure. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev spoke about this at the plenum. We said this in public to our people, and our people supported the policy of the Communist Party.

We've done a great deal of work for peace, and it is now impossible for us to change our position. World public opinion will not permit us to do so. We have carried out via the UN such momentous diplomatic actions to consolidate peace. What a great effect we have had from the visit of L. I. Brezhnev to the FRG and from many other peaceful actions we have undertaken. This has enabled all peace-loving countries to understand that the Soviet Union staunchly and consistently upholds a policy of peace. That is why it is now impossible for us to change the position we have adopted vis-a-vis Poland since the very start of the Polish events. Let the Polish comrades themselves determine what actions they must pursue. It would be inappropriate for us to push them toward more decisive actions. But we will, as earlier, tell the Poles that we regard their actions with understanding.

As it seems to me, Jaruzelski is displaying a certain degree of slyness. He wants to

make excuses for himself by coming forth with requests, which he presents to the Soviet Union. These requests, naturally, are beyond our physical capacity to fulfill, and Jaruzelski then says: well, look here, I turned to the Soviet Union and requested help, but didn't receive it.

At the same time, the Poles say directly that they are opposed to the introduction of troops. If troops are introduced, that will mean a catastrophe. I think we have reached a unanimous view here on this matter, and there can be no consideration at all of introducing troops.

As far as the provision of assistance to Poland is concerned, we have given that country more than a billion rubles. Not long ago we adopted a decision to ship 30 thousand tons of meat to Poland, of which 16 thousand tons have already been delivered. I don't know whether we'll be able to ship the full 30 thousand tons, but in any event we apparently are obliged by this decision to give a further definite number of tons of meat as assistance.

With regard to the PZPR and the creation of a new party to replace it, I believe it would be inappropriate to disband the PZPR. Those who spoke here were correct in arguing that this would be a completely unhelpful action.

GRISHIN. The situation in Poland is getting steadily worse. The line of our party toward the Polish events is entirely correct. With respect to the proposal by Jaruzelski to disband the PZPR and create a new party, one cannot agree with that. There can be no talk at all of introducing troops. We will have to look at economic questions and at what can be given to the Poles.

SUSLOV. In the press we must expose the intrigues of "Solidarity" and other counterrevolutionary forces.

CHERNENKO. I fully agree with what the comrades have said here. It is clear that the line of our party and of the CC Politburo vis-a-vis the Polish events, as formulated in the speeches of Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev and in the decisions of the Politburo, is entirely correct and in no need of change.

I believe that today we could adopt the following decision:

1. Take under advisement the information provided by Comrade Baibakov.
2. In our relations with the PPR in the future, abide by the general political line on this matter laid down by the CPSU CC, and also abide by the instructions from the CPSU CC Politburo on 8 December 1981 and the exchange of opinions that occurred at the CC Politburo's session on 10 December 1981.
3. Instruct Comrades Tikhonov, Kirilenko, Dolgikh, Arkhipov, and Baibakov to continue studying questions of economic assistance to Poland, taking account of the exchange of opinions at the session of the CC Politburo.

BREZHNEV. How do the comrades feel about this?

EVERYONE. Comrade Chernenko has very properly formulated all the proposals, and now it is time to adopt them.

The decree is adopted.

1. Translator's Note: It is curious why in this secret forum Brezhnev used dollars (instead of, say, transferable rubles) as the unit for measuring the size of Poland's request.

2. Translator's Note: The term Baibakov uses here, prodrazverstka (a contraction of prodovol'stvennaya razverstka), refers to the policy introduced by Lenin during the period of "War Communism" to force peasants to turn over their produce to the state. The policy led to great bloodshed, upheaval, and starvation.

3. Translator's Note: Either because of a mistake by Rusakov or because of a typographical error, the Russian text gives Boris Aristov's surname as Arestov. The error was corrected in the Polish translation.

4. Translator's Note: Marshal Josef Pilsudski was the military ruler of Poland during the interwar period, presiding over a regime that became increasingly tyrannical.

5. Translator's Note: The Russian word Rusakov uses to describe a unanimous vote, edinoglasno, is stronger than another word, edinodushno, which also is translated as "unanimous." Rusakov's statement indicates that no abstentions or dissenting votes were cast. It should be noted, however, that most subsequent speakers (Andropov, Gromyko, etc.) used the word edinodushno when referring to the PZPR Politburo vote, though Ustinov used edinoglasno.

6. Translator's Note: The transcript of "the previous session of the Politburo" (apparently of 8 December) has not yet been released.