

August 3, 1981

**Transcript of the Meeting Between Comrade L.I.
Brezhnev and Comrade E. Honecker at the Crimea
on 3 August 1981 (excerpt)**

Citation:

"Transcript of the Meeting Between Comrade L.I. Brezhnev and Comrade E. Honecker at the Crimea on 3 August 1981 (excerpt)", August 3, 1981, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BArch ZPA, J IV 2/2/A-2419. Published in Michael Kubina and Manfred Wilke, eds., "Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen:" Die SED contra Polen. Geheimakten der SED-Führung über die Unterdrückung der polnischen Demokratiebewegung (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 331-336. Translated by Christiaan Hetzner (CWIHP/National Security Archive) <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111229>

Summary:

Brezhnev and Honecker discuss issues related to Poland, including the need for stabilization of the Polish crisis and the composition of the new Politburo.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: [...] A tremendous concern to all of us naturally is the situation in Poland. Recently we spoke with you and Comrade Husák in detail about Polish affairs. We all have reason to say that the CPSU and the SED follow a unified [political] line in the interests of overcoming the Polish crisis and of stabilizing the situation in that country. This applies as well to the 9th Extraordinary Party Congress of the PUWP. The work with the Poles in connection with the Party Congress was not futile. By implementing an entire system of measures- starting with my telephone conversation with Kania and Jaruzelski, to the dispatching of party delegations to the rank and file, and up to the CPSU CC's direct appeal to the PUWP CC-we were able to prevent the Polish leadership from becoming instruments of the revisionists. We kept the centrists from further slipping towards the right. The most important thing, however, consisted of the true Communists regaining their confidence, their seeing that they can firmly rely on us.

The Party Congress has naturally brought no radical change for the better in the situation in the party and in the country. But that could not be expected. The crisis in Poland has severely shaken society. The people are confused, with a significant number of them having fallen under the influence of demagogues and screamers [Schreihälsen] from the counterrevolutionary wing of "Solidarity."

At the same time there is reason to conclude that the Right has not succeeded in pushing the party onto a social-democratic path or in seizing the leadership. The Party Congress confirmed what was already shown at the 11th Plenum of the PUWP CC: the majority of the party supports Kania and Jaruzelski, to them there is no alternative at present. Their positions were solidified, which allowed them then to act more boldly and decisively.

I have sent you the notes of my telephone conversation with Kania after the Party Congress [on 21 July 1981]. Several days later, I sent him a telegram in which I posed sharply-pointed questions to him: concerning the disgraceful spread of anti-Soviet behavior; regarding the demand by "Solidarity" to introduce group ownership into socialist factories; about the danger of the formation of a new mass party-a so-called labor party, etc.

Surmounting the crisis in Poland obviously necessitates long-term efforts. We must all bring [our] influence to bear on the Polish leadership to urge them to take consistent offensive action against the forces of anarchy [in order] to end the counterrevolution.

We receive information that the situation is not improving. "Hunger marches," in which women and children participate, are taking place, for example. I think that I will have a very open conversation with Kania and Jaruzelski here in the Crimea [on 14 August 1981]. I plan to ask them there how [things in] Poland should evolve. As a socialist country-this is one thing, on the social-democratic path, that is something else entirely. I have also referred to these questions in the telegram to Kania.

The composition of a new Politburo in the PUWP CC is not yet definitively clear. But there are people there on whom one can rely. Therefore, Erich, let us be patient and steadfast in ensuring the necessary change in the situation. To digress from the prepared text, I would like to say that the Poles will seek economic assistance, loan credits and food supplies. Naturally they will inform [us] of their Party Congress. One cannot help but see that for ourselves even the economic situation is very precarious. Problems weigh heavily on us. We have in our leadership a group-consisting of Comrades Suslov, Andropov, Gromyko, Ustinov, [deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers since 1980, Ivan Vasilyevich] Archipov, and Rusakov-who every day follow the situation in Poland very closely. If necessary, we will provide the Poles with certain assistance-depending on what they bring to the table.

The events in Poland are an eye-opener for a lot of things. What could earlier only be

foreseen, now has been confirmed through harsh and bitter experience. [...]

Comrade E. Honecker: [...] We all agree that the Polish events help the U.S. course of confrontation. This was also confirmed by the recent debate in the U.S. House of Representatives. Regarding the development in the People's Republic of Poland, continual coordination between us is particularly important.

Our Politburo has just recently received the report by the SED delegation to the 9th Party Congress of the PUWP led by Comrade [SED Politburo member Werner] Felke. We came to the conclusion that the complicated situation at this Party Congress mirrored that in the PUWP and in the PR Poland. It is evident, in our judgment, that the Marxist-Leninist forces within the PUWP are in the minority, and are not in the position to prevent straying to the right. Apparently the healthy forces are presently still too weak politically and ideologically, as well as organizationally, to bring about a change for the better. The forces of the right were able to influence considerably the political opinions and the elections to the central party organs in a revisionist fashion.

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: That is correct.

Comrade E. Honecker: Through the letter by the Central Committee of the CPSU and the stance of a number of fraternal parties of socialist countries the worst was prevented. In this sense-and here I agree with you-our common attitude led to certain consequences. The Party Congress, however, had debated and decided no concrete solutions through which Poland would be led out of its political and economic misery, and through which the advancing counterrevolution would be crushed.

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: That's correct.

Comrade E. Honecker: Our delegation returned with the impression that the PUWP is torn from within and unfit for the struggle, a party which constantly loses its Marxist-Leninist character. As the analysis shows, the forces of the right have consolidated their positions in the Central Committee, Politburo, and Central Committee Secretariat. More than 40% of the members and candidates of the Central Committee belong to "Solidarity," three are members of "KOR." Things have gone so far that an advisor to "KOR" (H. Kubiak) has been elected to the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

Every day the counterrevolution under the leadership of "Solidarity" undertakes new campaigns for the subversion, destruction, and seizing of the state's power, for which they exploit the economic difficulties. Among these are the so-called "hunger marches" organized recently in Kutno, Łódź (with the participation of 10,000 women and children) and in other locations, which were held under anti-socialist slogans. Our citizens may see all of this on Western television.

The opportunity at the Party Congress to label "Solidarity" as the true culprit for the economic misery of Poland was not utilized. Instead the members of the former leadership exclusively were blamed for it. With that, the path to capitulation was justified and continued. That is also shown in the recent retreat in the case of the strike threat by [the Polish national airline] LOT.

The enemy is now trying to fan the flames of general dissatisfaction and, through pressure, to achieve further division of power, premature Sejm elections, and the strengthening of capitalist structures. The Party Congress produced neither clear short-term nor long-term programs. The revisionist forces speak openly of a new Polish model of socialism, that will have an international impact. We must not underestimate the possibility that the Polish disease will spread.

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: That is a correct evaluation.

Comrade A.A. Gromyko: The evaluation is sober and correct.

Comrade E. Honecker: Clearly we must put up with Kania for a certain amount of time, as you have already determined. Perhaps it would be advisable to agree how we can integrate the Poles more firmly into our community. It would be possible to tie that to some of the correct statements at the Party Congress, for example the speech by Jaruzelski, in order to strengthen the people's power, to contain the enemy, and to tighten up our alliance.

I propose to you, Comrade Leonid Ilyich, that the CPSU, the CPCz, the SED, and possibly other fraternal parties, in close cooperation, further assist the PUWP to form a reliable, combat-ready Marxist-Leninist leadership. To this end we will make use of all our contacts.

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: When were you, Erich, last in contact with Kania?

Comrade E. Honecker: That was just before the Polish Party Congress. Afterwards I was in touch with other Polish comrades. Comrades from our Politburo were in Poland (e.g. Comrade [Konrad] Naumann in Warsaw). We were in close contact with at least 15 voivodships.

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: Answer a delicate question for me please, Erich. Can Kania take control of the situation? Do you personally have confidence in him?

Comrade E. Honecker: No. I don't have any confidence in him. He has disappointed us, and he never kept his promises. Only recently, at an advisory session of the Politburo with the First Voivodship Secretaries, have most of them criticized Kania, because he has taken no decisive measures.

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: Did this advisory session take place before the 9th Party Congress?

Comrade E. Honecker: No, afterwards. We know this from Polish comrades.

Poland is a cause for our entire movement. It would be good for our socialist community, good for the Communist movement and the restraint of opportunism, if we all gather in the near future to discuss political and theoretical matters which result from the development in Poland for the Communist world movement, for the convincing propagation of real socialism.

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: Are you thinking then of a meeting of the first secretaries of the fraternal parties of the socialist community?

Comrade E. Honecker: Yes. [...]

(Around 9 p.m., the conversation was briefly interrupted to watch the television broadcast of the meeting between Comrade L.I. Brezhnev and E. Honecker.)

Comrade L.I. Brezhnev: I would like once again return to your proposed meeting in Poland of general secretaries of the fraternal parties of the socialist community, Erich. It seems advisable to me to discuss these matters again later-in other words after our discussions with Kania and Jaruzelski and in consideration of the results of these

talks. Let us see how Kania will behave after these discussions.

Dear Erich, I would like to express my satisfaction over my meeting with you, over the discussion of significant matters regarding our joint work. I hope that this will bring progress towards a resolution of important questions of our cooperation.

[Source: SAPMO-BArch ZPA, J IV 2/2/A-2419. Published in Michael Kubina and Manfred Wilke, eds., "Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen:" Die SED contra Polen. Geheimakten der SED-Führung über die Unterdrückung der polnischen Demokratiebewegung (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 331-336. Translated by Christiaan Hetzner (CWIHP/National Security Archive).]