

Document No. 81: Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting

December 10, 1981

This crucial record, from just three days before the declaration of martial law, begins with the surprising comment by Brezhnev that the topic of Poland was not even on the Politburo's agenda. Another interesting point about this document is that the substance of discussion at first is entirely about Poland's economic needs, which were a critical issue underlying the entire crisis. Eventually, however, the talk turns to the political dimensions of the crisis and how the Soviet Union should respond. Moscow's frustration with Jaruzelski's vacillations remains high, even as the Polish leader appears to be on the verge of ordering the crackdown. Certainly their faith in his fortitude is as low as it has ever been. Here again, the question comes up as to whether the Soviets should resort to armed force. Perhaps nowhere in the available record is the answer more clearly given—by no less important figures than Suslov, Gromyko and Ustinov, among others—that under no circumstances are Soviet troops to be introduced. This seemingly unequivocal stance would have shocked most observers, particularly in the United States, where the unshakable assumption was that Moscow would never allow control of Poland to slip through their grasp. Unless and until the full record of Soviet leadership meetings becomes available, doubts will persist as to whether this was in fact the final Soviet position or a reflection of a desire not to face the ultimate decision as long as there was any hope of an alternative solution.

[...]

I. *On the question of the situation in Poland*

Brezhnev: This question does not appear on our agenda. But I think this session of the Politburo must begin with this question since we sent Cdes. Baibakov and Kulikov on a special mission to Poland to discuss urgent and pressing questions with the Polish comrades. On December 8, Cde. Kulikov provided information on the discussions he held in Warsaw, and yesterday, December 9, Cde. Baibakov reported from Warsaw that he held discussions with Cde. Jaruzelski. From these and subsequent discussions, it was apparent to Cde. Baibakov that the Polish comrades hope to receive additional raw and other materials during the first quarter of next year from the USSR and other socialist countries roughly in the amount of \$1.5 billion.

[...]

And now let us listen to Cde. Baibakov.

Baibakov: Following the instructions of the Politburo I left for Warsaw. I met there with all of the comrades with whom it was necessary to talk over the questions I was entrusted with.

First of all, I held a discussion with Deputy Director of the Council of Ministers Cde. Obodowski. In this discussion, the Polish comrades raised the ques-

tion of economic aid. I reported on the Polish request in a ciphered message [to Moscow].

It must be said that the list of goods the PPR has included as aid from us consists of 350 items in the amount of 1.4 billion rubles. It includes such goods as 2 million tons of grain, 25,000 tons of meat, 625,000 tons of iron ore and many other goods. Taking into account what we intended to give Poland in 1982, the total amount of aid to the Polish People's Republic consists of roughly 4.4 billion rubles, taking into consideration the requests made by the Polish comrades.

The time is now approaching for Poland to repay its credits to the West European countries. For this, Poland requires a minimum of 2.8 million hard-currency rubles. When I heard what our Polish comrades were asking and how much all of this aid amounted to, I raised the question of bringing our mutual economic relations into balance. Along with that, I noted that Polish industry is falling short of fulfilling its plan by significant margins. The coal industry, which is a fundamental source of foreign currency, is essentially disorganized, necessary measures are not being taken, and strikes are continuing. Now that there are no strikes, coal extraction is still occurring at a very low level.

Or, for example, let us say, the peasants have products; there is grain, meat products, vegetables, and so on. But they give nothing to the state and are adopting a wait-and-see attitude. In the private markets, a rather active trade is being conducted and at very elevated prices.

I said directly to the Polish comrades that more decisive measures must be taken since such a situation has arisen. Perhaps they should introduce something like a surplus-appropriation system.

If one speaks, for example, about grain reserves, Poland harvested more than 2,000,000 tons this year. The people are not going hungry. City-dwellers go to the market in the countryside and buy all the products they need. And these products are there.

As is known, by decision of the Politburo and by request of the Polish comrades we are providing them with aid in the form of the supply of 30,000 tons of meat. Of these 30,000 tons, 16,000 tons have already been redirected abroad. It must be said that produce, meat in this case, is being supplied in dirty, unsanitized railroad cars used to transport ore, in a very unattractive condition. Genuine sabotage is taking place during the unloading of this produce at Polish stations. The Poles utter the most obscene words about the Soviet Union and the Soviet people, they refuse to clean the railroad cars, and so on. It is simply impossible to count all of the insults that pour out about us.

Realizing this situation with the state of the balance of payments, the Poles want to introduce a moratorium on the repayment of debt to the Western countries. If they announce a moratorium, then all Polish vessels in the waters of any state or at the docks, and all other property located in countries to which Poland is in debt will be seized. Therefore the Poles have now given orders to the captains of vessels to leave port and to remain in neutral waters.

Now I will say a few words about my discussion with Cde. Jaruzelski. He confirmed the requests made by Obodowski relating to the supply of goods. Then in the evening, along with the ambassador and Cde. Kulikov, we again visited Jaruzelski. Obodowski and the secretary of the Central Committee of the PUPW in charge of these questions also attended the discussion. Jaruzelski was in a highly agitated state. It felt as though he was under the strong influence of a 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 there and then answered that in the event of an outburst by Solidarity, they would quarantine all hostile elements.

As far as primary party organizations, they have essentially collapsed and are inactive. And concerning the party as a whole, Jaruzelski said that it effectively does not exist. The country is going to pieces and local districts are not receiving reinforcements because the Central Committee and the government cannot give firm and clear orders. Jaruzelski himself has turned into a man who is unbalanced and unsure of himself.

Rusakov: Cde. Baibakov has correctly outlined the situation with respect to the condition of the Polish economy. What should we do now? It seems to me that we have to supply those goods to Poland which are covered by economic agreements, but then this supply should not exceed the quantity of goods we supplied in the first quarter of last year.

Brezhnev: And can we give this now?

Baibakov: Leonid Ilyich, we can only give it from state reserves or by limiting supplies to domestic markets.

Rusakov: The day before yesterday they had a conference of secretaries of voivode committees. As Cde. Arestov [sic: Aristov] reported, the secretaries of the voivode committees did not understand Cde. Jaruzelski's speech at all, which did not give a clear, precise line. No one knows what is going to happen in the next few days. There was a conversation about operation "X". At first, the point was that it would be at night from the 11th to the 12th, then from the 12th to the 13th. And now they are already talking about it being around the 20th. The idea is that the chairman of the State Council, Jabłoński, will speak on radio and television, and announce the introduction of martial law. At the same time, Jaruzelski declared that the law concerning the introduction of martial law can only be invoked after it has been discussed in the Sejm¹⁵, and the next session of the Sejm is set for December 15. In this way, everything is becoming very complicated. The agenda for the session of the Sejm has been published. The question of the introduction of martial law does not appear on it. But in any case, Solidarity knows well that the government is preparing to introduce martial law, and in turn it is taking all necessary measures [in the event of] the introduction of martial law.

¹⁵ The Sejm is the lower house of the Polish parliament.

Jaruzelski himself says that he is contemplating addressing the Polish people. But he will not talk about the party in his address, but will appeal to people on the basis of their patriotic emotions. Jaruzelski speaks of the necessity of proclaiming a military dictatorship as existed under Piłsudski, pointing out in addition that the Polish people will understand that better than anything else.

As concerns other figures, such as Olszowski, he has recently been acting more decisively and it must be said that at a Politburo session the decision to introduce martial law and to adopt more decisive measures against extremist figures in Solidarity was passed unanimously; no one expressed any objections. In addition, Jaruzelski intends to be in touch with the allies on this question. He says that if Polish forces cannot handle the resistance from Solidarity, then the Polish comrades are relying on help from other countries, up to and including the introduction of armed forces on the territory of Poland. In addition, Jaruzelski refers to a speech by Cde. Kulikov who allegedly said that help from the USSR and allied states for the armed forces of Poland will be provided. However, as far as I know, Cde. Kulikov did not say so directly, he simply repeated words spoken by L. I. Brezhnev at another time, to the effect that we will not leave the PPR in trouble.

If one is to speak about what is being done in the voivodeships, one has to say directly that one cannot feel the strength of the party organizations at all there. In some measure administrative authority is felt. Essentially, all authority is in the hands of Solidarity. What Jaruzelski is saying sounds like he is leading us by the nose since there is no sense of correct analysis in his words. If they do not quickly organize themselves now, then they do not intend to and they will not act against the onslaught of solidarity; there will be no success in improving the situation in Poland.

Andropov: From the discussion with Jaruzelski it is evident that he has not yet made a firm decision on the introduction of martial law and, notwithstanding even the unanimous decision of the Politburo of the PUWP CC on the introduction of martial law we have not yet seen any concrete measures from the leadership. The Solidarity extremists are attacking the leadership of the PPR by the throat. The Church in recent days has also expressed its clear position. It essentially has gone over to the side of Solidarity.

And of course in these circumstances the Polish comrades must quickly prepare to move on "X" and carry out that operation. At the same time, Jaruzelski declares that we will move toward Operation "X" when Solidarity forces us to. That is a very alarming indication, even more so since the last session of the Politburo of the PUWP CC, and the decision on introducing martial law that was adopted there, testify that the Politburo is becoming more decisive; all the members came out in favor of decisive actions. That decision pressed Jaruzelski and he must now somehow extricate himself. Yesterday I spoke with [Mirosław] Milewski and asked him what kind of measures are being contemplated and when. He answered that he did not know about Operation "X" or about a concrete timeframe for its execution. In this way, it turns out that Jaruzelski is either

hiding his plan for concrete actions from his comrades or he is simply abandoning [the idea] of carrying out that measure.

Now I would like to note that Jaruzelski is rather persistently placing economic demands before us and conditioning the implementation of Operation "X" on our economic aid; and I would even say more than that, he is raising the question, albeit indirectly, of military assistance.

Now, if one looks at the list of goods our Polish comrades are requesting then we would say directly that serious doubts arise about the necessity of supplying these products. For example what relation to the success of Operation "X" does the supply of fertilizer and certain other goods have? In this connection I would like to state that our position, as it was formulated earlier at the last Politburo session and as Leonid Ilyich expressed it earlier more than once, is completely correct and we should not retreat from it. Put another way, we take a position [in favor of] international aid, we are concerned with the conditions that have taken shape in Poland, but as regards the implementation of Operation "X", that must be wholly and entirely the decision of the Polish comrades; however they decide, that is how it will be. We will not insist on it, nor will we talk them out of it.

As far as economic assistance, of course it will be difficult to do that on the scale they are requesting. Apparently something needs to be done. But again I want to say that the framing of the question about apportioning goods as economic aid carries an insolent character, and all of this is being done so that if later we do not supply them with something they can then shift the blame to us. If Cde. Kulikov actually spoke about the introduction of troops then I consider that he did so incorrectly. We cannot risk that. We do not intend to introduce troops into Poland. That is the correct position, and we must observe it to the end. I do not know how matters will develop in Poland, but even if Poland comes under the authority of Solidarity that will be one thing. But if the capitalist countries fall upon the Soviet Union, and they already have a suitable agreement, with various kinds of economic and political sanctions, then that will be very difficult for us. We must show concern for our country, for the strengthening of the Soviet Union. That is our main line.

Generally, it seems to me our position in relation to the situation in Poland, which was formulated by Leonid Ilyich in his numerous speeches and affirmed by the decisions that have been made today at the Politburo session, has been going through a very thorough exchange of opinions. All this should form the basis of the policy, which we should adhere to in our relations with Poland.

As for communications, which lead from the Soviet Union to the GDR through Poland, we must of course do something and undertake their protection.

Gromyko: Today we have been discussing the question of the situation in Poland very sharply. Very likely, we have never discussed it so sharply before. This is explained by the fact that we ourselves do not know the direction events in the PPR will take. The leadership of Poland itself feels power slipping through its hands. Kania and Jaruzelski, as is known, were counting on the support of neutrals. But now effectively there are none, there are no neutrals. Their posi-

tion was defined rather clearly: Solidarity showed itself to be a patently counter-revolutionary organization, a pretender to power that has declared itself openly concerning the seizure of the power. The Polish leadership must decide the question: it will either surrender its position if it does not take decisive measures, or it will take decisive measures, introduce martial law, quarantine the extremists from Solidarity, and establish necessary order. There is no other way.

What is our attitude toward the Polish events? I completely agree with what the comrades have been expressing here. We can say to the Poles that we regard the Polish events with understanding. This is a measured formulation and there is no basis for changing it. At the same time, we will have to try somehow to disabuse Jaruzelski and other Polish leaders of their attitude with respect to the introduction of troops. There can be no introduction of troops into Poland. I think that on this score we can instruct our ambassador to visit Jaruzelski and inform him of this.

Notwithstanding the rather unanimous decision of the Politburo of the PUWP CC on the implementation of martial law, Jaruzelski is now taking a vacillating position again. At first he was somewhat heartened, but now he has grown soft again. Everything that was said to him before remains valid. If they exhibit vacillation in the struggle with the counter-revolution and beyond, then nothing will remain of socialist Poland. The introduction of martial law, of course, would impress upon the counter-revolution in Poland the firm intentions of the Polish leadership. But if the measures they intend to enact are implemented, I think one may expect positive results.

Now, with respect to the creation of a new party, about which Jaruzelski spoke, I think that it is necessary to say to Jaruzelski directly that there is absolutely no need to create some kind of new party because that would signify a retreat by the Polish leadership and an admission that the PUWP is really not a fighting political organization but an organization that has permitted mistakes. It would be an admission of its own weakness and play into the hands of the Solidarity extremists. Then the Polish population, which feels definite sympathy toward the PUWP in its function as the leading force, will be completely disappointed in it.

I think that we should not allow any harsh instructions now, which would force them into this or that action. I think that we have the correct position here: establishing order in Poland is a matter for the Polish United Workers' Party, its Central Committee and the Politburo. We have been telling the Polish friends and in the future we will tell them [again] that it is necessary to take firm positions and it would be impermissible to relax now.

Of course, if the Poles deliver a blow to Solidarity, then the West in all likelihood will not grant them credits and will not provide any support. This is what they have in mind and this obviously must be taken into account by us as well. Therefore the proposal by Leonid Ilyich is correct, to instruct a group of comrades to review this question and, taking into account our possibilities, provide definite assistance to the PPR.

Ustinov: The situation in the PPR, of course, is very bad. The situation grows more complicated day by day. In the leadership, in particular in the Politburo, there is no firmness, there is no unity. And all this has already affected the state of affairs. Only at the last session of the Politburo was a decision on carrying out martial law passed unanimously. Now everything hinges on Jaruzelski. How will he be able to carry off this decision. So far no one can speak openly about Jaruzelski's actions. Even we do not know. I had a conversation with [Florian] Siwicki. He said immediately that even we do not know what the general is thinking. In this way, the person who essentially fulfills the responsibilities of the minister of defense of the PPR does not know what is going to happen or what actions the chairman of the Council of Ministers and the minister will take.

As for what Cde. Kulikov supposedly said with respect to the introduction of troops into Poland, I can say with full authority that Kulikov did not say that. He merely repeated what Leonid Ilyich and we said about not leaving Poland in trouble. And he knows perfectly well that the Poles themselves requested us not to introduce troops.

As for our garrisons in Poland, we are fortifying them. I, perhaps, am also inclined to think that the Poles will not head towards a confrontation, and only if, possibly, when Solidarity seizes them by the throat will they act.

The trouble is that the Polish leaders are not demonstrating decisiveness. As our comrades correctly pointed out here, we should not impose any of our decisions on them and we should pursue the policy on which we agreed. In our turn, we must ourselves be prepared and not take any actions not provided for by our decisions.

Suslov: I consider that, as is evident from the comrades' speeches, we all have a unanimous point of view toward the situation in Poland. In the course of the entire period of events in Poland we have displayed self-control and composure. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev spoke about this at the Plenum. We spoke about this in public and our people supported such a policy by the communist party.

We are carrying out great work on behalf of peace and we cannot change our position now. World public opinion will not understand us. We have conducted such major actions through the U.N. for the strengthening of peace. What an effect we have had from the visit of L. I. Brezhnev to the FRG, and from many other peaceful actions we have taken. This has made it possible for all peace-loving countries to understand that the Soviet Union is firmly and consistently defending a policy of peace. That is why it is impossible for us to change the position on Poland we have adopted at the very beginning of the Polish events. Let the Polish comrades themselves determine which actions they should take. We do not have to push them towards any more decisive acts. But we will say to the Poles, as we did earlier, that we regard their actions with understanding.

It seems to me that Jaruzelski is manifesting a certain cunning. He wants to cover his own back with requests which he presents to the Soviet Union. Naturally, we do not physically have the ability to fulfill these requests, but Jaruzelski

will say later, well, I turned to the Soviet Union and requested help but I did not receive this help.

At the same time the Poles declare directly that they are against the introduction of troops. If troops are introduced, that will mean a catastrophe. I think that we all share a unanimous opinion here that there can be no discussion of any introduction of troops.

As far as providing help to Poland, we have provided more than one billion rubles. Not long ago, we decided to supply Poland with 30,000 tons of meat, and 16,000 tons have already been supplied. I do not know whether we can supply 30,000 tons in total, but in any case, it is apparent that in keeping with this decision we must add a certain number of tons of meat in the form of assistance.

As far as the PUWP and the creation of a new party in its place, I consider that the PUWP should not be dissolved. Others here have said correctly that this would be an entirely negative act.

Grishin: The situation in Poland is deteriorating further. Our party line in relation to the Polish events is completely correct. As concerns Jaruzelski's proposal for the dissolution of the PUWP and the creation of a new party, one cannot agree with that. There can also be no discussion of introducing troops. It will be necessary to review the economic questions and to give what is possible to the Poles.

Suslov: It is necessary to expose in the press the intrigues of Solidarity and other counter-revolutionary forces.

Chernenko: I am in complete agreement with what the comrades have been saying here. Really, the line of our party and of the CC Politburo in connection with the Polish events, which has been formulated in the speeches of Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev and in the decisions of the Politburo, is completely correct and should not be changed.

I consider that today it would be possible to adopt the following decisions:

1. Take into consideration Cde. Baibakov's information.
2. In our future relations with the PPR, proceed from the general political line of the CPSU CC on this issue, as well as from the instructions of the CPSU CC Politburo of December 8, 1981, and from the exchange of views at the CC Politburo session of December 10, 1981.
3. Instruct Cdes. Tikhonov, Kirilenko, Dolgikh, Arkhipov, and Baibakov to continue to study questions of economic assistance to Poland, taking account of the exchange of views at the CC Politburo session.

Brezhnev: What is the opinion of the comrades?

All: Cde. Chernenko has formulated all the proposals extremely correctly; they must be adopted.

The resolution is adopted.

[Source: RGANI, Fond 89, Opis 42, Delo 6. Translated by Malcolm Byrne for the National Security Archive.]