

January 22, 1981

Transcript of the CPSU Politburo Session, 22 January 1981 (excerpt)

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Summary:

Delegation of CPSU Party Officials headed by L. M. Zamyatin discusses the political and social situation in Poland after Zamyatin's trip there. Zamyatin gives an optimistic report about the PZPR's efforts to regain control over society in Poland, and comments on the division in Solidarity as well as its strengths and weaknesses that can be exploited by the PZPR. The members of the Delegation discuss possible measures that the PZPR can implement in its counterrevolution against the growing power of antisocialist forces in Poland.

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SESSION OF THE CPSU CC POLITBURO
22 January 1981

Cde. M. A. SUSLOV presiding.

Also taking part: Cdes. Yu. V. Andropov, 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, I. V. Kapitonov, V. I. Dolgikh, M. V. Zimyanin, K. V. Rusakov.

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8. On the Trip to Poland by a Delegation of CPSU Party Officials Headed by Cde. L. M. Zamyatin

ZAMYATIN. A gradual process is under way now in Poland whereby the party organizations are increasing their activity. Faith in the strength of the party organizations is growing. The party has withstood the first tests of this process, but it has not yet faced the most serious tests. There is talk now about so-called "work-free Saturdays" and about Rural Solidarity. These questions naturally are the subject of very intense debate. It is important to note that the PZPR has an understanding with the United Peasants' Party on these matters. The complexity of the situation in Poland stems from the fact that activities are carried out by the enemy, against which a decisive struggle is necessary, and that under the pressure of past mistakes the party has lost its creative ties with the people. The working class has many reasons for dissatisfaction. This is especially true of young workers, who have not yet suffered hardships. They are being exploited by Solidarity.

Now the Polish comrades have come up with a slogan about the renewal of socialist life, that is, a return to Leninist norms in the Party and state.

As far as Solidarity is concerned, it is heterogeneous in its composition. By the way, I should say that it is a fundamental movement with which the PZPR must come to terms. According to Walesa, he now has ten million people in Solidarity. The PZPR CC believes he has six million. The counterrevolutionary forces are grouped in the Committee for Workers Defense, the so-called KOR. These include Kuron, Michnik, Gwiazda, Lis, and Walentynowicz — in all, around 40 people. Solidarity is now essentially a political party, which is openly hostile to the PZPR and the state.

Moreover, the group around Walesa, backed by the Church, wields great strength. If we look at the situation in Poland now, it is characterized by a certain increase in the role of the Party and its concrete activities. This of course is leading in turn to a growth of tensions, since the counterrevolutionary forces have their plans and aspire to power, but see that opposition from the PZPR will not enable them to fulfill their plans.

Poland now has branch trade unions numbering about 6.5 million people. The friends envisage uniting these into a federation and, through political methods, reducing the role of the militant wing of Solidarity to a minimum. What they have in mind is to sever KOR from Solidarity. The PZPR CC at present is busy forming a third trade union, the so-called autonomous trade union. Of course this effort in the first instance is being carried out at Party organizations and enterprises where Solidarity is firmly

entrenched. The PZPR is doggedly seeking to restore trust among the masses.

As far as young people are concerned, the independent youth league includes about 13 percent of them. Endless discussions are under way among young people. The lack of training in Marxist-Leninist sciences in secondary school is taking its toll.

With regard to the mass media, their current status does not correspond to what is needed. The Party is taking steps to restore order and reestablish control. But even that will still leave things far from normal. The majority of newspapers are not under the control of the Party. Things are especially bad with television. Ideological erosion stemming from the decline of Party-educational work among the masses, and the neglect of this work in the mass media, define the current situation in Poland. Thus, for example, even when the heads of television and radio were replaced, the vast majority of employees—that is, those who are directly responsible for preparing materials for broadcast — sympathize with Solidarity.⁹⁶ The country is in a state of permanent discussion both in the Party organizations and at the enterprises. This discussion is also being conducted in the mass media, where one often finds debates about the Polish model of socialist society, about liberalization, about the need to revise Marxism-Leninism, about pluralism in political life, and so forth.

What sorts of measures are needed to restore order in the PPR? In our view, the firm pressure on the Party and the instructions that were given to the Polish friends are forcing them to increase their efforts, including their efforts with regard to the mass media. There is increased understanding that if the Party lets the media slip completely out of its control, it will not win the struggle for influence on public opinion in the country.

I had a discussion with Cde. Kania. He spoke about the situation in the country. The friends believe that there is now no need to rush in holding a Party congress. In our view we shouldn't now be sending a large number of delegations to Poland, but should instead send highly qualified comrades in the form of a delegation who could answer questions that would reflect the viewpoint of the CPSU CC. Overall the leadership is increasingly aware that it must display firmness in struggling against the enemy, though so far only in the political sphere. It would be wrong to say that there is not complete unity about this and that the leadership is divided. Everyone is working under the auspicious influence of the first test of the strength of the ongoing changes. The wave of demands to "settle accounts" with the previous leadership has been put to rest. The Polish friends assured us that they are sufficiently resolved to combat their enemies and will not back down any further. Cde. Kania requested that we convey his deep gratitude to L. I. Brezhnev and all the members of the Politburo for the help that the Soviet Union has given to Poland. It is worth noting that our ambassador in the PPR, Cde. Aristov, is carrying out extensive work and is keeping the Central Committee accurately informed about what is going on there.

GROMYKO. We should have a more detailed exchange of views about the situation in Poland. We need some sort of steps to pursue. We must ensure that our influence will not abate. Further meetings with the Polish friends are perhaps necessary. As for where these meetings should take place, we need to think about that. It's impossible to overstate the danger posed by Solidarity. Solidarity is a political party with an antisocialist bent. We must continually remind the Polish leadership of this point. Their efforts to keep secret the issues they discuss are especially poor. Everything that comes up at their Politburo is known by the next day to a very large segment of the population. The Polish friends, despite our recommendations, do not want to adopt emergency measures; they've essentially abandoned this idea altogether. For example, when they decided to reclaim the sites of trade union organizations occupied by representatives of Solidarity, the secretary of the PZPR provincial committee refused to fulfill this directive of the PZPR and declined to return the sites.

ZAMYATIN. This, Andrei Andreevich, occurred in two provincial committees.

ANDROPOV. Today we received a telegram from Warsaw indicating that the reaction to Cde. Zamyatin's trip to Poland was positive. The trip was useful, and the delegation did a good job. I think we should instruct Cdes. Rusakov and Zamyatin to prepare recommendations that could then be considered by the Commission on Poland.

RUSAKOV. We are exerting great influence on the Polish friends. I'd note that almost every week Leonid Il'ich is speaking with Kania about all these matters. It seems to me that this is the most important thing because in the discussions Leonid Il'ich tactfully raises all the questions and seriously indicates to Cde. Kania what he should do. It follows that our organizations—the Foreign Ministry, the KGB, and the Defense Ministry — should designate officials who can constantly keep track of and decide questions about Poland.

KIRILENKO. It seems to me there is not yet a serious revival of the PZPR. Perhaps this is only the beginning.

ZAMYATIN. When I was speaking about a revival of the PZPR's activity, I had in mind the trips by Party organizers to localities, discussions in workers' collectives, etc.

USTINOV. Cde. Kulikov was in the PPR not long ago. Cde. Kulikov's impression was that there is not yet any serious turnaround in Poland's situation. We need to apply constant pressure on the Polish leadership and constantly get after them. We intend to hold maneuvers in Poland in March. It seems to me that these maneuvers should be boosted somewhat — in other words, that we should make clear we have forces ready to act.

SUSLOV. Of course, the main task first of all is to support the leadership of Poland in the measures it is carrying out and, in addition, to apply necessary pressure. Through Cde. Zamyatin's trip, we've now seriously indicated to the Polish friends what they should do with the mass media. That's their weakest point, and we need to help them. We also need to monitor how they are preparing for the Party congress, what sort of changes will be made in the Party statutes, and what sort of economic questions they'll be considering. We should send only sensible people to the PPR.

A decision was adopted: to approve the trip to Poland by the CPSU delegation headed by Cde. Zamyatin; and to instruct various CC Departments, the Foreign Ministry, the KGB, and the Defense Ministry to draft proposals for consideration by the Commission on Poland, taking account of the exchange of views at the Politburo session.

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