

June 22, 1978

Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, 22 June 1978 (Excerpt)

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Summary:

Andropov discusses the trial and possible sentencing of Shcharansky, who was charged with spying for the United States.

Credits:

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Russian

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Top secret
only copy
Working paper
SESSION OF THE POLITBURO OF THE CC CPSU
22 June 1978

Chaired by Comrade Brezhnev, L.I.

In attendance: Comrades Andropov, Yu. V.; Grishin, V.V.; Gromyko, A.A.; Kulakov, F.D.; Pelshe, A.Y.; Suslov, M.A.; Ustinov, D.F.; Demichev, P.N.; Kuznetsov, V.V.; Ponomarev, B.N.; Solomentsev, M.S.; Chernenko, K.U.; Dolgikh, V.I.; Ryabov, Y.P.; Rusakov, K.V.

[...] 2. Information of comrade Andropov, Yu. V. on the Shcharansky matter

BREZHNEV. Comrade Andropov would like to inform the Politburo about the Shcharansky matter. Let's give him the floor.

ANDROPOV. I want to inform the Politburo that at the present time in the USSR 520 people are kept in prison, of these 110 people are held on charges that have political coloring. We will have to decide the question of Shcharansky's trial, the preparation of which is completed now. As is known, Carter made a speech to the effect that Shcharansky should not be brought to responsibility. But we can not satisfy such a request. Shcharansky committed crimes and has to take full responsibility for them. He will be put on trial. But what is the best time for the trial? Perhaps it should be started on July 10, this seems to be better. The USSR Ambassador to the United States comrade Dobrynin also recommends this time.

We discussed all questions of organization of Shcharansky's trial together with comrades Rudenko and Smirnov. Shcharansky admits his guilt, we uncovered his spy activity and can provide appropriate materials. He is charged under two articles: under article 64 for espionage and under article 70 of the Criminal Code for betrayal of the Motherland. His trial will take place in the same courthouse as Orlov's. It is a good place, a club, a small audience will be appropriately prepared. Shcharansky refuses to take a lawyer. He can refuse the lawyer named by the court. If he names another lawyer, and he has right to do it in the trial, then we will have to take a break for 5 days. Besides, we meant to publish a short report about the beginning of Shcharansky's trial. I believe it is not expedient to allow any correspondents into the trial.

EVERYBODY. Right, don't let them in.

ANDROPOV. What will Shcharansky's sentence be? Everything will depend on how he will behave himself. For example, Orlov was to be sentenced for three years according to the article of the Criminal Code, but he behaved in such a rude way during the trial that the court was obliged to sentence him for seven more years with further exile for five years. Shcharansky, of course, will not receive, say, the death sentence, but the court will give him a stern sentence of, say, 15 years.

As our Ambassador comrade Dobrynin reports, Carter asked not to mention Shcharansky's connections with CIA. This, of course, is up to the court; we must not conceal the materials, but maybe we can give comrade Dobrynin certain directions to talk with Vance and express to him the idea that the trial will be a closed one, but the court possesses numerous materials about Shcharansky's connections with the CIA. The Soviet court is very democratic, but everything will depend on how the defendant will behave himself; that also counts.

Comrade Andropov's information was taken into consideration.

K. Bogomolov