
SPEECH of comrade Leonid Ilich Brezhnev at the meeting of the party and state leaders of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty
By Leonid Brezhnev

Moscow, 5 December 1980

Dear comrades,

In my turn, I want to thank the Polish comrades for the detailed information presented here.

I have also listened, with great attention, to the speeches of the leaders of the other fraternal parties of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty.

The open, comradely exchange of opinions is always useful, and in the present situation the exchange of ideas between comrades of ideas, between allies, has an even greater importance. I have pointed out that the thing that concerns us most is the situation of the Polish comrades and, obviously, this is the reason why I will also speak about this issue.

It is with pain in our hearts that we find that brotherly Poland passes now through a deep crisis. This crisis has been in the making for a long time, and it could have been stopped if measures had been taken when events began to take a turn for the worse. But nothing of the kind happened. In my conversations with Gierek, I raised the issue of the negative tendencies which begun to manifest in Poland many times in the last few years. Even this year, during the discussions I had with the Polish comrades in the Crimea, I raised the question that action is necessary against the counterrevolutionary elements. ... Superficiality, ambition, arrogance? I do not know. Now the consequences of the Polish crisis have become very serious not only for Poland but also for the whole community of socialist countries, for the international communist and workers' movement. The Polish crisis can negatively influence the general ratio of forces.

We think that, as time goes by, the Polish comrades will clarify the causes that made such a situation possible, what happened there, why the ideological work was slighted, why the slogan of the renewal of the nation obscured the class fight, why the party – on its first contact with the strike movement – began to back down, what is hidden behind the mistakes made in the planning in regard to the economic and social construction. It is easy to issue a slogan: let us give each worker a car, and feed him from the budget. But now it is not the time to look for the mistakes made in the past. It is inadmissible that, under the pretext of laying the blame on some persons, the party be the fall guy for all of these mistakes.... from the past, and in this way the system as such to be disparaged. It is not good that the Communists be put in the situation of repenting.

The situation that was created in Poland presupposes a new way of thinking and a new way of acting. The enemy would not have raising his hand menacingly if the party had shown more firmness.

What I am saying now is very frank, but I think it is correct to point out that the depth of the crisis in the country is proportional to the crisis within the party. We have day by day established contacts with the new Polish leadership, we have had working contacts [with them]. To the knowledge of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, the Polish comrades maintain such contacts with the other fraternal socialist countries as well. A month ago I had discussions with comrade Stanislaw Kania and we arrived at the same opinions on the Polish crisis. We started from the fact that we could not back down any longer, and that we must not wait for the enemy to push the party into a deadlock. Both we and the Polish comrades were of the opinion that now the main thing is to reestablish the fighting capacity of the party, to make all of the

party's components active. The general opinion was that the party's leadership could rely on the healthy forces of the people, the army, and that part of the trade unions that remained faithful to the party. As far as we know, the comrades in other parties share the same point of view.

What are the lessons we can learn from the evolution of the situation in November? Comrade Kania says that the situation has become more difficult. He mentioned the fact that at the 7th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the PUWP it was emphasized that in Poland the forces aiming to topple the socialist system had become more active.

The comrades who underlined here the fact that an acute class fight was taking place in Poland are right. The task of the Communists in connection with this fight is clear: socialism in Poland must be defended. It is clear where the danger of this situation comes from. The plan was unveiled according to which the counterrevolutionary antiworker forces acted, who the enemy is, what the present and future positions he wants to occupy are. It is apparent that a center exists leading the counterrevolutionary actions in Poland. The adversary gives impetus to the development of events, and – step by step – tries to turn the opposition into a political party. It is felt that “Solidarity”, serves a basis for this purpose, which counts on the transformation of the Peasants' Party, the Democrat Party, and a number of youth organizations into a new opposition political party. The conditions for the creation of a Christian Democratic Party are being prepared leisurely. Claims are also being prepared for bourgeois-type elections to take place in Poland.

In parallel with these actions, a bitter battle is being fought to break down the Polish United Workers' Party, to weaken the links between the leadership and the local party organs, to involve a large number of party members in strikes and in the free trade unions. We have to deal seriously with the direction taken by “Solidarity”. Replacements of cadres were made in the regions. Initiative groups appeared which aimed at forming party organizations that do not recognize the authority of the Central Committee of PUWP. Voices are more and more often heard calling for the change of the name of PUWP into the socialist party or otherwise. The counterrevolution tries to bring about dissensions between the PUWP and the intellectuals. Youth organizations, some unions, and a series of higher-education institutions are breaking loose to an even larger extent from the party's leadership.

The opposition is searching for ways to influence individual peasantry. In all these actions it is in cahoots with the church.

The issue of the mass information media is becoming especially acute. The importance of mass information media is understood by the adversary as well. Of late, the situation in this domain has also been detrimental to the Polish United Workers' Party .

Lastly, there is the issue of the army. It is not correct to assume that the adversary does not act in the army, too. Through various channels, including the Catholic Church, pressures are exerted on the army. The activity of neutralizing this is under way with increasing intensity.

We do not exaggerate the importance of these issues at all but rely on the data received from the Polish comrades. We have received with good faith the declarations of the Polish comrades stating that they want to solve the crisis by political means. We are not partial to extreme measures if they are not necessary. We will be patient, but there is no certainty that the enemy will be equally restrained. If the enemy comes to power, he will use the most extreme measures. In fact, the enemy has not minded the choice of his fighting means for a long time. The enemies of socialism say that the occupation of enterprises, of the transportation and communication means are peaceful means, that they do not use violence. The actions of deriding the men in military uniforms, sabotaging the supply of foodstuffs and other goods, hiding foodstuffs to worsen the situation in the country, the illegal introduction of foreign currency and of foreign mass information media into the country, the attacks on honest people, the threats of a violent settling of accounts with the Communists, makes it impossible for us to speak of a restrained behavior of the opposition. Consequently,

whether we like it or not, the confrontation is in full swing. The most painful thing is that this confrontation is now taking place on a platform imposed by the adversary.

The restrained character of the [Polish] party's position is understood by the adversary as a weakness, as a lack of decisiveness. The Supreme Court of Justice cancels the decisions of the tribunals which punished those who had not submitted to the social order. In an interview, Lech Walesa declared that I was the one who had brought Gierek to power, I was the one who overthrew...

They sometimes say that in Poland there is instability of power, that there is no Constitution, and the problems are solved by agreements between collectives of workers and the government; the decisions of the state organs, the state prosecutor's office, the judicial bodies etc. are not taken into consideration. This is not only a consequence of mistakes made in the past, but also of the strikes that have been taking place in Poland for five months.

If things go on like that in the future, in our opinion the issue of the social system being overthrown will only be a question of time. That is why, comrades, it is our duty to call a spade a spade. A very serious danger hovers over social-ism in Poland. The enemies succeeded in digging a moat between the party and the working people. The Polish comrades were not able to explain to the masses convincingly that the counterrevolution intends to push into this moat not only the communists but also the best forces of the Polish nation.

The Polish comrades must say firmly and convincingly: no step back, but only forward to consistently reconquer, one after the other, the positions lost by the party, to reestablish the leading role of the party, to launch an offensive against...

We say "yes" to the improvement of socialist democracy, which presupposes the active participation of the working people in the leadership of society.

We say "yes" to the role and activity of the trade unions.

We say "yes" to an improved manner of leading society.

But in an equally determined manner we say "no" to the attacks against the party, against socialism, and we say a categorical "no" to the counterrevolution which tries to throw Poland into anarchy and chaos, which tries to over-throw and destroy the socialist system in Poland, under the banner of the renewal of socialism. Our current meeting demonstrates that we all back the Polish leadership in its efforts to overcome the crisis which appeared in this country. The brotherly socialist countries met the Polish comrades halfway also in regard to the meeting of their economic requirements. The Soviet Union made important decisions about this issue, more precisely about granting credits in foreign currency and convertible roubles, supply of foodstuffs, raw materials, and other goods which the Polish comrades currently need. The total value of these aids is about two billion dollars, including 1.3 million roubles in hard currency. Aside from this, together with Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and GDR we decided to grant the Polish comrades another 450 million dollars. We will try to help Poland by any means possible in the future as well.

It goes without saying that it is Poland's efforts, its rational program from an economic point of view that will have the predominant role in bringing the situation back to normal. But if the situation in Poland does not stabilize, if the counterrevolution is not rejected, if people do not work and continue the strikes, much to our regret all of the measures taken to help Poland of which we spoke about before will not yield the desired results.

At the present moment, the situation in Poland is even more serious. It is regrettable that some of the measures I spoke about were never implemented. The Polish comrades could do more to improve the situation in the party and the state. The current task of the highest importance is toughening the party on the basis of the democratic centralism, abiding by the Leninist norms in party work and life. We take the view that it would be better to strongly raise the issue of observing the decisions of the central bodies as their

infringement is inadmissible.

The admission of new members to the party, the toughening of the party components is an important issue since the former leadership hurried to abolish the counties, which weakened the party force very much. The fight against the adversaries of socialism will increase the trust in the party of party members, and will enable the party to perform its work in the masses not from defensive positions but from offensive ones. Our experience demonstrates that, in the course of its history, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union encountered lots of difficulties and – in extra-ordinary situations – it is required to create organs of the Central Committee that can be used in sectors of vital importance to the socialist state.

Now a few words about the trade unions. The fact is positive that some [industrial] branch trade unions adopted a loyal position to the PUWP, but they need further support so that they can not be pulled away from the party's influence. It is now high time that the leadership of the "Solidarity" trade union was put in their proper place. Walesa and those around him boast of receiving help from abroad.

Comrade Kania spoke here about the strikes. In the beginning, the "Solidarity" trade union said the strike was the extreme form of defending the interests of the working class. Now they make a norm out of the strike, with antipopular political purposes. The damage caused by the strikes must be shown. Nowhere are the workers paid their complete remuneration. Taking the example of capitalist countries, and of bourgeois democracies, nowhere are the strikers paid for the time they did not work. I do not say anything about the political strikes, where the bourgeois state resorts to the repression apparatus, taking severe measures. All this does not make one feel like organizing strikes any longer.

In regard to the Catholic church which comrade Kania and other comrades spoke about, I will say only a few words. We understand that we have to influence the moderate circles of the Catholic church in the sense desired by us, that is to say against those whose purpose is the conquest of political power, but we have to remember – and this is very important – that the church tries to establish its control of the PUWP, of the mass information media.

It is of paramount importance to reestablish the control of PUWP over the mass information media. We know that this is one of the important preoccupations of PUWP, but the decisive factor is to obtain results on that score.

We have spoken here about the imperialist actions. The West not only watches the evolution of the situation in Poland, but is directly involved in it. In our contacts with the United States we warned them not to meddle in Poland's internal affairs, we gave them to understand that neither the Poles nor their allies will allow that Poland be drawn away from the community of socialist countries, saying that Poland was and will remain an important component of the socialist system.

Comrades,

In Poland, the situation was not declared exceptional, but in fact – as I pointed out here – such a situation exists. We think that the Polish comrades act judiciously when they get ready to take extraordinary measures against their adversaries...to take the counteroffensive because tomorrow it will be more difficult than today. The main attention must be paid to the railways and to the harbors since the paralyzing of activity in these fields would negatively affect not only Poland's interests but also the interests of a number of socialist countries. I repeat once more that in no case whatsoever can we admit that, because of the disorganization of transport, the interests and security of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty be threatened.

A clear and precise plan must be drawn up regarding the control by the army and state security of the communication lines. It is necessary that this plan be firmly implemented. And [even] without declaring a state of emergency, if need be, measures can be taken to establish military high command and patrol-ling in the endangered zones.

Comrades, I think you read the draft document of our conference. The Polish theme is not made prominent in

this document, but it is approached in a different manner. Our meeting will be construed as a decision of the socialist countries to help Poland.

Comrades, the current events in Poland harm our interests, and we will remain faithful to the Polish comrades in the solving of...as the danger menacing Poland is not only a Polish issue but also an issue of us all. We cannot forget the fact that 600,000 Soviet soldiers died for the liberation of Poland. The blood of Soviet people is mixed with the blood of Polish patriots. That is why the adversaries of socialism must know that Poland cannot be removed from the community of socialist countries. This is in our interest, in the interest of socialism and peace.

[Source: National Central Historical Archives (ANIC), Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, chancellery, no.5257, 9.12.1980. DR, vol.2. Translated for PHP by Viorel Buta]