

November 4, 1980

Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Erich Honecker

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Summary:

Leonid Brezhnev writes to East German leader Erich Honecker, regarding the Polish Crisis. Brezhnev suggests that the Soviet Union reduce oil shipments to the GDR, in order to alleviate Poland's economic crisis.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Secret

Dear Erich!

After discussing matters in the Politburo, we decided to turn to you and Comrades G. Husak, J. Kadar, and T. Zhivkov on an important and, in some sense, extremely urgent matter.

Not long ago, as you know, we received Cdes. Kania and Pinkowski in Moscow. The situation they face is, one might say, exceptionally onerous. An urgent necessity has arisen for all of us together to help Poland make it through the current crisis.

You are well aware of the political situation in the PPR. The counterrevolution is on the attack and has practically seized the party by the throat. At the recent meeting we conveyed to the Poles our views about the need to halt the course of events and launch an attack against the counterrevolutionary forces, and we are informing you about this separately. In these circumstances, the situation in the economy acquires enormous significance and is now close to a catastrophe. A further deterioration of the situation in Poland threatens to inflict enormous damage on the entire socialist commonwealth. For that reason it is our common internationalist and.— I would even say — our class duty to do everything we can to prevent this.

Let me emphasize that we ourselves will assume the main burden in this matter. Despite our own economic problems, which I described to you, we believe it is necessary to give Poland significant financial and economic assistance by extending hard-currency grants and extra shipments of a number of goods.

However, it will be impossible to provide this assistance without a certain degree of participation by the other fraternal countries. In raising this question, we of course are very well aware that it is not simple. For that reason, we have tried to find an approach that would have only a minimal effect on internal plans and would not be something beyond your means.

Concretely, here's what I have in mind. We propose to reduce oil shipments somewhat to a number of countries in the socialist commonwealth. This oil will be sold on the capitalist market and the hard-currency revenues will be transmitted to Poland in the name of the corresponding countries. This will enable Poland to alleviate its critical financial situation and to purchase certain vitally necessary products and other goods.

As far as the GDR is concerned, the volume of oil shipments from the Soviet Union in 1981 will, with your consent, be reduced by 600,000-650,000 tons of the designated amount, without affecting the level of shipments of German goods to the Soviet Union.

I request, Erich, that you look upon this suggestion with understanding. I am certain that our display of fraternal solidarity will help our Polish comrades withstand what for them is a trying hour.

With Communist greetings

[signed]

L. BREZHNEV

4 November 1980