

September 15, 1981
**Transcript of Brezhnev's Phone Conversation with
Kania, 15 September 1981**

Citation:

"Transcript of Brezhnev's Phone Conversation with Kania, 15 September 1981",
September 15, 1981, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMDB, ZPA, J IV 2/202-550, first
published in CWIHP Special Working Paper 1.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/112799>

Summary:

Brezhnev worries the Polish Solidarity movement will undermine communist authority in
Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

TOP SECRET INFORMATION ABOUT Cde. L. I. BREZHNEV'S TELEPHONE
CONVERSATION WITH Cde. S. KANIA

"Hello, Stanislaw! They told me that you want to speak with me. Please go ahead."

(After S. Kania's information)

"I listened to your remarks. It seems to me that you're still under the sway of certain illusions.

"I discussed the situation in Poland with you and Wojciech in the Crimea roughly a month ago. At that point there was already more than enough basis for disquiet. Since then, in our view, the situation has become even more alarming. I'll say this candidly: you should wake up again and think about who is controlling the situation in Poland. Has the fulcrum of power there already changed? The leaders of Solidarity are acting so brazenly that you cannot help but ask yourself this question.

"Solidarity's congress and the whole atmosphere around it attest that Solidarity openly aspires to the role of a political party, a party with an anti-Communist bent. The results of the first round of the Congress, in our view, amounted to a declaration of war against the PZPR and the socialist regime.

"Of course this in no way was a congress of workers. Even according to Solidarity's own information, only 25 percent of the delegates were workers. More than a quarter of the delegates were representatives of the counterrevolutionary organizations KSS-KOR and Confederation for an Independent Poland. And it was not the interests of the working class that preoccupied the participants in this gathering. Instead they focused on how to humiliate the PZPR and the government and force them to their knees.

"At the Congress, as you know, the question was raised about possibly removing from Solidarity's statutes the provisions about the leading role of the party and recognition of Poland's international alliances.²³² These are provisions in your Constitution. This means that attacks have begun against the constitutional bases of society.

"Solidarity has decided not to confine itself solely to Poland. It is attempting to impose its subversive ideas on neighboring states and to interfere in their internal affairs. That's the only way one can view the 'Appeal to the Peoples of Eastern Europe,' which was adopted by Solidarity's Congress. There aren't many words in that document, but they all make the same point. The authors of the document would like to foment disturbances in the socialist countries and stir up groups of various renegades. I don't know what you've decided to do about this provocative escapade, but we believe it is essential to give it the rebuff it deserves.

"Solidarity is not limiting itself to slogans and appeals. It is in fact making preparations, including military preparations, to seize power. According to reports filtering in from the West, Solidarity is creating 'combat groups,' whose task is to terrorize Communists and patriots.²³⁴ This is just what fascists do in creating brigades of stormtroopers. According to the same reports, Solidarity is initiating courses for new draftees in the Polish Army. How can this be tolerated? If fresh troops come in imbued with anti-socialist and anti-Soviet preconceptions, you might quickly find that the army disintegrates.

"One position after another is being transferred to Solidarity's control. The legitimately appointed directors of enterprises are being removed without any prior

arrangement. Solidarity is calling the shots at more than half of the large factories and is creating there what it calls 'organs of self-management.'

"In rural areas there have been instances of the unauthorized seizure of state and cooperative farmland by private peasants. Solidarity reacted viciously when the mass media featured criticism of its actions, and they are now seeking to take complete control of the media.

"It is painful to speak about the frenzy of anti-Sovietism that has now engulfed Poland. How can you let this go unpunished? How can you tolerate instances of psychological and physical terror against Communists and all others who want to work honestly? As an ultimatum, the opposition continually demands that the elections to the Sejm and the People's Councils be moved up. Their ultimate goal is, through 'peaceful means,' to destroy the economic and political foundations of the socialist order.

"I will not refer to many other things, which are no less alarming. These things must be at least as well known to you as they are to us. It is understandable why at the recent plenums, including the third, many members of the newly formed Central Committee were speaking with great alarm about the situation. They demanded not only bold words but decisive actions from the PZPR leadership.

"Their concerns are understandable. The impudent leaders of Solidarity openly declare that their organization is already the leading force in society.

"In general, everything suggests that the counterrevolution is seizing power from the PZPR.

"In the Crimea, you, Stanislaw, and Jaruzelski said that 'you are constantly determined to use the most decisive measures against the counterrevolution.' But just where are these measures?

"You also said that you have an appropriate plan to introduce emergency or military rule. When will even a part of this plan finally be implemented?

"The growing activity and energy of the anti-socialist forces in the country are in stark contrast to the way the leaders of the party and government are behaving. How can you permit this?

"We request that you inform us, the leadership of a fraternal party, the CPSU, what you intend to do.

"In practical terms, we have nothing to add to the recommendations we already provided to you about how to get out of the crisis, including the recommendations in the letter of 5 June and during the meeting in the Crimea on 14 August. These recommendations and advice remain in force.

"Both then and now we have been convinced that if you do nothing to offset the appeals of the insolent Solidarity, you will open the way to counterrevolution. In our view, it is essential not to delay any further in gearing up the party for a decisive and uncompromising struggle against the counterrevolution. And when the very fate of socialism is at stake, you can't limit yourself to only one form or another of struggle.

"I believe it is important to emphasize, once again, that in today's complicated world situation, the course of events in Poland is forcing the socialist commonwealth to

confront the ever thornier question of how to maintain security in the center of Europe. If Poland is ruled by Solidarity, who will guarantee the inviolability of the commonwealth's vital lines of communication that pass through the PPR, including strategic lines of communication? How could we, the participants in the Warsaw Pact, ensure the preservation of the results of the Second World War, which were codified in well-known political and international legal documents?

"I want to emphasize, once again, Stanislaw, that the fate of socialism in Poland and the outcome of the political struggle in your country profoundly affect all the fraternal countries.

"In the emerging situation, on behalf of our Politburo, I request that the PZPR CC leadership respond to us about the matters I have raised, so that we can have a clear idea about your plan of action at least for the near future.

"What you have said is of definite interest [to me], but it does not change the general picture. I request that you pay greater heed to what I have reported to you today."