

May 31, 1983

**Meeting Minutes of the Politburo of the CC CPSU,
Regarding Western Plans for Deployment of New
Nuclear Weapons in Europe**

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Summary:

Politburo discussion, presided over by Andropov, on how to respond to the Western decision to deploy new nuclear weapons in Europe.

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Absolutely secret
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(rough draft).

SESSION OF POLITBURO OF CC CPSU

31 May 1983

Chairman com. ANDROPOV Yu. V.

Present com[rade]s. Aliev G. A., Gorbachev M. S., Grishin V. V., Gromyko A. A., Tikhonov N. A., Ustinov D. F., Chernenko K. U., Demichev P. N., Dolgikh V. I., Kuznetsov V. V., Ponomarev B. N., Solomentsov M. S., Zimyanin M. V., Kapitonov I. V., Rusakov K. V., Ryzhkov N. I.

In the beginning of the session comrade Andropov expressed words of deep sadness about the death of comrade Arveed Yanovich Pelshe. Comrade Andropov informed that the funeral of comrade Pelshe, according to the decision of the CC is going to be held at 11 o'clock on the Red square by the Kremlin wall. The members of the funeral commission will come to the Dom Soyuzov at the time of carrying out the body; the rest of the members of Politburo, candidates to members of Politburo and the secretaries will come at 11 o'clock straight to the Mausoleum.

[ANDROPOV.] Now I would like to address the issue, which in my opinion deserves the exchange of opinions and suggestions.

Today I've talked with a number of members of the Politburo about our government's announcement of the response connected with the deployment of American missiles "Pershing-2" and cruise missiles in the countries of Western Europe; and also concerning the resolution adopted by the countries of "Big Seven" in Williamsburg. It's important that we discuss this matter, exchange opinions, and express the suggestions that should be developed.

If you look at the events that are taking place in the Western countries, you can say that an anti-soviet coalition is being formed out there. Of course, that's not accidental, and its highly dangerous. At the session of the NATO countries, that's going on in Williamsburg, very aggressive speeches are given; and the very resolution adopted by the "Big Seven" is non-constructive, but aggressive.

If you analyze the reaction of the countries of the West on our declaration, then the reaction has two sides. From one side, our declaration had impressed them very much. There are indications, seen through some of the speeches of some of the western politicians that give hope to normal and productive high level talks about the decrease of the arms race and disarmament, especially of the nuclear weapons. On the other side there are indications of absolute fulfillment of the so-called double decision of NATO, which is the placement of nuclear missiles in the countries of Western Europe.

Actions of president Reagan, who is a bearer and creator of all anti-soviet ideas, creator of all the untrue insinuations regarding our country and the other countries of the Socialist Community, deserve very critical and harsh reaction from our side. Meanwhile in the press, Michail Vasilyevich [Zimyanin], those actions don't find that full coverage and deserving answer. This, of course, is not right. Imperialistic countries of the West want to put together a bloc against the USSR. They act together and, as you saw, Reagan managed, though with some pressure, to convince his partners in the "Big Seven" to sign the resolution and express their opinions against the politics of the USSR.

Now let's see what we do. To my disappointment we act alone. Some of us speak out, but we all do it separately. We, the countries of Warsaw Pact and the other socialist countries that don't belong under Warsaw Pact, have to demonstrate strong unity. But the leaders of the socialist countries are buried in their national problems. These, if you pardon my words, are just minor unimportant actions.

That's why I have a suggestion to gather here in Moscow first secretaries of socialist parties' CCs and the chairmen of Sovmins for debating the current situation. At that meeting we could exchange opinions about the talks on the arms race and disarmament, decrease of the nuclear missiles in Europe, about the last decisions of the NATO countries, and about the other subjects, related to our counteraction to the policies of the Imperialistic countries, targeted at the worsening of the global situation.

Of course, there comes up the question of Romania: what to do with it? It seems to me that not to invite Romania is not in our interests, without it we can't really hold a meeting, though, as it's known, they voted against the publication of our declaration.

A question appears: when to hold a meeting and with what to conclude it. It seems to me that we can't put away for a long time this sort of meeting, because the Western countries are quite active today. For now we aren't active enough. I think that we should assume positions now, before the meeting, to start the counteraction against the policies of the imperialist states. It seems to me that on that meeting we should develop, adopt, and then publish a document that would express our reaction on NATO's decision. Maybe in that document we could once again bring up the suggestions that were brought up before about non-aggression acts between the countries of the Warsaw Pact and the countries of NATO. It's quite possible that other ideas could be brought up.

In his recent speech, [Former West German Chancellor Willy] Brandt, introduced an idea about joining the talks on the limitation of nuclear missiles in Europe and limitation of strategic nuclear missiles. Maybe we should all think about that idea and make it an official proposal—join the talks about the nuclear missiles in Europe with the talks about the limitation on all the strategic nuclear weapons. We also should think when and where to bring up this proposal. I think that MFA and the Ministry of Defense will decide on that problem.

We have to open up a wider network to win public opinion, to mobilize public opinion of the Western countries of Europe and America against the location of the nuclear weapons in Europe and against a new arms race, that's being forced by the American administration. The behavior of Japan, and especially of the president [Yasuhiro] Nakasone worries me. He completely took the side of the more aggressive part of the Western countries, and he completely supports Reagan's actions. Because of that we should consider some sort of compromise in our relations with Japan. For example: we could think about joint exploitation of several small islands, that have no strategic importance. Maybe there will be other suggestions. I, personally, think that Japan could initiate more active cooperation with the Soviet Union in the economic sphere.

The next point concerns China. I think that the Chinese aren't going to move any further on their positions. But all our data shows that they could increase their trade with USSR. They did offer us a trade agreement for this year, that substantially increases our goods exchange [compared to] the previous years of trading with China. Because of that we might have to send comrade [First Deputy Prime Minister Ivan V.] Arkhipov to China to conduct a series of talks and to "feel the ground." And if we succeed in improving our economic ties with China through cultural, sports, and other

organizations, it could be considered a big step ahead.

Now about the Middle East. To say that the events in the Middle East don't bother us would be wrong. The fact is that we have very good relations with Syria. But Syria argues against the agreement that was made between Israel and Lebanon, Syria has no friendly relations with Iraq. Recently Syria has been facing minor problems with PLO, and in particular with [PLO Chairman Yasser] Arafat. In one word—here is a problem we have to think about.

If you look at our propaganda, you can come to a conclusion that it's quite calm when it comes to strategic preparations of NATO. That's true, we shouldn't scare people with war. But in our propaganda we should show more brightly and fully the military actions of the Reagan administration and the supporting countries of Western Europe, which in other words means disclosing in full scale the aggressive character of the enemy. We need that, so we could use facts to mobilize the soviet people for the fulfillment of social and economic plans for development of the country. We can't, comrades, forget in this situation defense sufficiency of our country. These topics should be constant in our media. You remember comrade L. Y. Brezhnev at the XXVI session of CPSU [23 February - 3 March 1981] said, that military threat is coming and because of that we should lead a struggle against the influence of military revanchist ideas of the West. That's what it came to: Reagan calls up the senators if they support the ideas of the Soviet Union, and charges them with treason. Why don't we use press to speak against the lazy bums, those who miss work [progulshikov], bad workers? I ask the comrades to express their opinions about the questions brought up and maybe comrades have other suggestions. Who would like to take the stand?

GROMYKO. I completely approve of the suggestions that were expressed by Yu. V. Andropov. First of all about the call of the meeting of the leaders of socialist countries, countries of the Warsaw Pact. That kind of meeting, to my opinion, we should gather. [Romanian leader Nicolae] Ceausescu, I think, we should invite to the meeting. I would say, it's beneficial for us.

ANDROPOV. Right now they are asking for a consultation.

GROMYKO. Particularly they were asking us for that. The meeting of the leaders of the countries of the Warsaw Pact will show the unity of our Pact and prove our principal positions in the questions of nuclear weapons and reduction of arms race. I think that we should adopt at the meeting a document, as rightly mentioned before Yuri Vladimirovich [Andropov]. This document should sound very clearly. Along declaration shouldn't be made, but it should be sharp and concrete. This would be our collective action of the countries of Warsaw Pact. It is needed.

What to do with the talks? I fully support the suggestion of Yuri Vladimirovitch about uniting the talks on nuclear armament in Europe and strategic armament in whole. As you know, Reagan has got a goal, whatever it takes him, to place the nuclear missiles "Pershing-2" and the cruise missiles in the European countries. A question comes up, what should we do, whether we should continue the talks? As it's known, Western countries, many of them, are ready for deployment. That's why we should bring in something fresh. And in connection with that this suggestion about uniting the talks will serve our interests.

ANDROPOV. We should invite for these talks the English and French, let them participate, they are nuclear countries.

GROMYKO. I think the English and French will refuse for sure to hold the talks, but we should invite them, that's right. The main suggestion, I think, is the combined talks. That type of a suggestion deals with the restriction of nuclear armament in the whole,

which means that in the talks they will include the tactic missiles, also. In their time Western countries themselves put a question about the talks on all kinds of nuclear weapons.

ANDROPOV. That's good, let them say that themselves, how they view that suggestion.

GROMYKO. It will be easier for us to keep in contact with those who speak against all kinds of nuclear weapons. I think, that they can try this, in spite of the fact that they will insist on location of nuclear weapons in Europe. In a word, this will give us a break.

ANDROPOV. Anyway, we don't lose anything.

GROMYKO. New ideas are starting to appear in America, though not officially, but it's very important. Maybe they will agree to union. Anyway, this line [idea] will have to be fulfilled right away.

We will have an extra plan—it is the continuing of the talks on restrictions of use of strategic nuclear armament in the world and restrictions on nuclear armament in Europe. The United States, as it's known, is talking about the fact that they can only strike in response to aggression. I think, that they without enough reason wouldn't dare to use nuclear missiles. Against the first strike are also Canada, England, France, and Western Germany. This we also have to use skillfully in our propaganda and in our practical interests.

Regarding Japan, I have an idea: why don't we use our suggestion regarding the islands of Hamabayi [sic-Habamai?—ed.], Kunashir, and other small islands, that really are very little spots, and draw the border, I mean make an adjustment of the border. It would be then the most prestigious suggestion.

ANDROPOV. When I talked about Japan, I didn't mean that suggestion. I talked about joint exploitation of several little islands.

GROMYKO. We could do both at the same time. These same islands are small dots in the ocean and they don't have such a grand strategic importance.

About China. The People's Republic of China expresses wishes to broaden our economic ties. Even in practice it is starting something in that sphere, for example the increase of goods exchange.

ANDROPOV. This should be checked out, as I said.

GROMYKO. I think, that the Chinese aren't going to go for anything else. One of the terms for normalization of our relations is the withdrawal of our troops from Chinese borders. It seems to me that we could think about that. But then the Chinese began to push for withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia.

ANDROPOV. I suggest we don't bring up that question.

GROMYKO. Regarding Mongolia. Maybe we should withdraw part of the army away from the border. There is a danger in the Middle East that Israel will strike against Syria. If Syria ruins Reagan's plans, Americans will go bankrupt.

ANDROPOV. I would suggest we turn to Syria to advise it not to pull itself into this conflict. If the events start happening, we should warn Syrian leaders beforehand to

work out a corresponding plan.

GROMYKO. Syria sends tanks to Lebanon. Our task is to advise Syrian leaders to withhold from any participation in the events of the war.

ANDROPOV. May be we should write a letter about that to [Syrian leader Hafez] Assad?

USTINOV. All that we do regarding defense we should continue doing. All the missiles, that we planned to install, should be installed. All the airplanes should be stationed at the spots we agreed upon. Reading the resolution that was adopted by the "Big Seven," I should say, it was very cunning and strict. But it has its weak points and we should figure out how to use them. But everything happens in life, so "they" may be installing the missiles in England, FRG, and other countries.

I consider the suggestion of Yuri Vladimirovich absolutely correct that we should carry out active work, to counteract against the imperialistic actions of our enemies.

Regarding Mongolia I should say, that if we move the Soviet army, that's now located there back to our territory then we will lose a very good post. Everything is already equipped there. That's why we have nowhere to move on the Soviet border.

Regarding Cambodia and Vietnam, we already talked about it not once. I figure that we shouldn't lose positions won in battles, but we should retain them. The sanctions which were discussed earlier by Yuri Vladimirovich, should be supported. We will look at it very carefully and think about our actions. We also have to think about talks in Vienna and Geneva, in regards to nuclear weapons as well as strategic. In fact I consider very rightful the suggestion to combine both of these talks. Maybe, Y.V. Andropov will consider it rational to speak out with that suggestion, and maybe give another suggestion, let's say, about decrease of nuclear weapons by 50 percent, including French and English nuclear weapons.

TIKHONOV. England and France will never agree to that.

USTINOV. If they don't agree, than our proposal will sound all over the world. The middle-range missiles,- Western countries wouldn't refuse against their location in Europe.

GROMYKO. But what then to reduce?

USTINOV. We can reduce all the rockets.

GROMYKO. We proposed that.

USTINOV. Yes, we already proposed, but we should offer again. About Japan I would like to say that we can look only at very small islands, but the big island Kunashir—we have quite settled there. For example, from the Japanese sea we can only access through the strait of La Pérouse, and, I should say, here we would substantially cut our maneuvering space.

About the meeting with governments of socialist countries. I completely agree with Yuri Vladimirovich. We should expose the Western countries, their offensive speeches and military tone. Maybe Yu.V. Andropov should say something on that topic, too.

GROMYKO. I will have a speech at the session. In that speech, it seems to me, I should spell out a number of suggestions.

USTINOV. Maybe I should give an interview? In one word, we activate the work, gather socialist parties and agree with them on this subject.

CHERNENKO. Even if Romania doesn't sign, we could adopt a resolution without the signature of Romania.

USTINOV. Japan hadn't joined the military alliance of the Western countries, yet. That's why we should act not only upon Japan, but the other countries, also, so that not only we openly spoke out against militaristic intentions of Reagan administration, English, Japanese and others, but the socialist countries did it, too, and the leaders of the socialist countries could have spoken out, too. By the way, in those situation they have kept silent. We have, comrades, to build, strengthen the socialist bloc, but very skillfully. To my regret, the relations between Vietnam and China are very strained. I absolutely agree with the decision of Yuri Vladimirovich about enforcing anti-war propaganda, targeted at the arms race, wrong suggestions of the Western countries and especially at the American administration. It looks like the Americans thought about installing a space command. In a word, I would like to say, that we should more widely speak out about our suggestions and expose the militaristic intentions of the Western countries.

ANDROPOV. Of course, we aren't going to change Reagan's behavior, but we will expose his antisoviet, militaristic intentions very decisively.

TIKHONOV. Reagan doesn't react any more to our suggestions. Regarding the uniting of the talks, this is one more of our important suggestions, and we should bring it in. Missiles, of course, they will place in Western Europe. But [we] should explain it broadly and clearly to our people and all other nations of other countries. The resolution of the Soviet government is a very important document. We now have only to develop propaganda, expose the actions of the West and have a strong influence over people. I think that meeting that Yuri Vladimirovich talked about is vitally important to be held. And with that we should somehow hint to socialist countries that they alone and each one of them, let's say GDR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary give a speech. Let's say a speech for Nuclear-free Zone in Europe and on the other topics. [Bulgarian leader Todor] Zhivkov, for example, can give a speech about Nuclear-free Zone in the Balkans. Now about China. All the initiatives about the increase in goods exchange between USSR and China come from China. This is very important. That's why we should feel the ground about broadening our economic relations with China and send to China comrade Arkhipov for the talks.

Regarding removal of the troops from the Chinese border, to me it seems like an unrealistic act.

Regarding Syria, as comrades have talked about it, everything is correct. If Syria gets involved in a conflict, then we can lose everything we have in the Middle East. And we have to keep Syria in our orbit. That's why we should conduct more work with the Syrian government. We have to find such a method in our propaganda, such forms and methods of conducting it so as to tell our people the truth about the nuclear war, but not to scare them, as Yuri Vladimirovich correctly pointed out.

CHERNENKO. It's absolutely correct, that Yuri Vladimirovich gathered us today, and the suggestion is right about a meeting with the leaders of all the members of the Warsaw Pact. If you look attentively at our friends—Czechs, GDR, Hungarians, Bulgarians, you get an impression, that the leaders of these countries don't worry about the current situation. That's why the very fact of calling a meeting will mean a

lot. I think that we should call a meeting in a near future, as said Yuri Vladimirovich.

VOICES. Support the suggestion about the calling of a meeting.

CHERNENKO. At that meeting we can talk about China, about the Middle East and about other important questions of the international situation. I think that all the questions that Yuri Vladimirovich stated in his speech were very correct. There gathered a "big Seven" of Western aggressive states, but we are also a "big Seven," and we should meet, but this would be now a meeting of "big Seven," fighting against nuclear arms and for peace.

About working out the suggestions, that Yuri Vladimirovich talked about, I think, that, including our interests, we should prepare them well and introduce [them] to [the] CC.

GRISHIN. I completely support what Yuri Vladimirovich suggested. The situation is dangerous. The resolution of the "Big Seven" that they will put the missiles in Europe, has an offensive character. Actually, there is being formed a bloc based on an anti-soviet platform. Western countries try to outweigh the countries of the Warsaw Pact with the nuclear weapons. The meeting should be held before the meeting of NATO.

GROMYKO. It could be held even after NATO's meeting. Then we could find out their point of view on several questions.

GRISHIN. On our meeting we should call socialist countries to active counteraction toward imperialistic countries. About the invitation of Romania, I am for it, though there's no guarantee they will sign the resolution. They behave very badly. Not long ago, as it was known, Ceausescu hosted [conservative West German politician, Bavarian state premier Franz Josef] Strauss and during the talks he spoke very badly. I think that we should prepare a good, short, but sharp document, that will be adopted there.

I am completely for opening of wide range of propaganda in our press and among our oral propagandists, which was mentioned before by Yuri Vladimirovich.

ANDROPOV. In that sphere we so far don't do a whole lot.

GRISHIN. I think that with Japan we should look for the way to soften the relations. With China we could develop economic relations on higher levels. Of course, China won't give up on Cambodia, and on that issue we will never come to an agreement. I think, that we should keep Syrians from unnecessary actions, so that they don't get pulled into military confrontation.

ANDROPOV. At one point, remember I told the Cubans that we won't fight for them and won't send any troops to Cuba. And it worked all right, the Cubans accepted it. We should tell the same thing to Syrians. I think such a saying will prevent them from confrontation.

GORBACHEV. You said it right, Yuri Vladimirovich, that the time now is calling us to increase actions, taking necessary steps to develop a broad program of counter-measures against the aggressive plans of the Western countries. And in the inside plan we have certain serious tasks. We can take some action towards the countries of CMEA [Council on Mutual Economic Assistance], countries of Warsaw Pact, and separate socialist countries. I completely support the suggestions about holding a meeting and other actions, that were suggested here, including the military

line.

The United States is moving to Europe. Here we can't wait. We have to act.

ALIEV. I support all the suggestions of Yuri Vladimirovich. This complex of actions is vital to be carried out. Our external politics has an offensive character, but the character of a peace offensive. The imperialists are irritated by our suggestions. All that you said here, Yuri Vladimirovich, regarding a meeting of the socialist countries, improving relations with China, about the Middle East, especially about starting a wide propaganda—all this deserves special attention and should be adopted.

DEMICHEV. Why don't we write a letter to Reagan from the name of comrade Andropov?

ANDROPOV. I would modernize a bit the suggestion of P. N. Demichev and write a letter to the participants of the meeting of the "Big Seven," and then, maybe later, to Reagan.

PONOMAREV. In response to the actions of the "Big Seven" we should work out our suggestions. Maybe, after the meeting of the leaders of the socialist countries we should hold party activities, and meetings in the country.

USTINOV. This is all correct, but what if we scare the people?

PONOMAREV. On 20 June, for example, there's going to be an Assembly of Peace in Prague, we should use it for propaganda of our peaceful propositions.

ZIMYANIN. I completely agree with what Yuri Vladimirovich said. I would ask a permission to begin realization of this ideas starting tomorrow. In particular, gather the editors of the leading newspapers, information agencies and tell them about these ideas, especially point the sharp end of our propaganda at Reagan and his aggressive suggestions.

KUZNETSOV. I think, we should activize also the work in parliamentary relations, especially about sending our parliamentary delegations to France, USA, and the other countries. Obviously, on the session in A.A.Gromyko's speech he should mention these questions.

ANDROPOV. Now I would like to tell you, comrades, the most important [item], what I would like to inform you of. I am talking about improvement of our work inside the country, and about the increase of our, leaders' responsibility of the assigned tasks. It doesn't only concern me—Andropov, or Gromyko, Ustinov, we all are personally responsible for the departments that we lead. Comrade Tikhonov has to keep a tight grip on Food industry. Comrade Gorbachev has to use fewer weather excuses, but organize a fight for the crops, mobilize people so that they don't talk about bad weather, but work more, so they use every good day, every minute for gathering more crops, do all we can to increase wheat crops and other grain and meat and dairy. Comrade Aliev has an important task—improvement of the public transportation system. Comrade Kapitonov has to increase the common goods production, more should be done in that field. Comrade Demichev should be stricter with the repertoire of the theaters, we have too many negative sides, and the other questions in the development of our culture demand more attention. You, Petr Nylovich [Demichev] are the one to be asked from in this sector. I wouldn't talk about the other comrades, they all know their departments and their goals. I think that you should gather all your employees and tell them about the ideas and tasks that we talked about today. You can gather all of them or you can gather them in according to groups, whatever is better.

USTINOV. Maybe I should gather with comrade Smirnov¹ all those in defense and we'll talk about our defense.

TIKHONOV. I will gather all the ministers and their VPs and talk to them about these subjects.

RUSAKOV. We have to, obviously, check everything that's going on in the socialist countries in these areas and then let them know our suggestions and give them friendly advice.

ANDROPOV. All this, comrades, can be done and I think that you will take these tasks actively. There is a suggestion to give to comrades Gromyko and Zimyanin a task to summarize all that we talked about on our session, and prepare a suggestion about the counter-actions towards the actions of the imperialistic states, targeted at worsening of the international situation. Don't be long with the preparation of those suggestions and entering them in the CC. Agreed?

EVERYONE. Agreed.

ANDROPOV. On this permit me to end our meeting.

1. [Ed. note: Evidently a reference to Deputy Prime Minister Leonid Smirnov, head of the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK).]