

**Record of conversation
Of Cde. L. I. Brezhnev with Leaders of Fraternal Parties
of Socialist Countries in Budapest**

(Gierek, Husak, Zhivkov, Kadar, Honecker were present at the meeting.)

March 18, 1975^x

Comrades E. Gierek, G. Husak, T. Zhivkov, Ya. Kadar, and E. Honecker and also Comrades B. Bisku, V. V. Shcherbitsky, K. F. Katushev, E. A. Shevardnadze, K. V. Rusakov, A. M. Alexandrov, and translators from the Hungarian, German, and Bulgarian sides took part in the conversation with Comrade Brezhnev.

L. I. Brezhnev. I am very glad to see you all, dear comrades. I have to admit that I missed you. The reason that we have not met all together for a long time is that I have been slightly sick in the recent months. This is why, and this is the only reason why I was unable, in particular, to hold the previously scheduled meetings and conversations in Moscow with comrades Gierek and Honecker. There was and there is nothing serious with me, just tiredness, my nerves are getting worn out, and the doctors began to insist on a certain period of rest. It did not work as genuine rest, it was intertwined with work, as you understand, one cannot get away from it in our situation, but still, I had to give up travel, meetings, and sitting in my office for long hours for this period of time.

You also know that it led to a whole wave of rumors and speculations primarily in the bourgeois press. Some questions and conversations started at home as well—we had to reassure people in some way. That is why I decided to hold a meeting with British Prime Minister Wilson, whose visit had been scheduled long ago upon mutual agreement. We also considered it useful to meet with Wilson in order to exert certain influence on him, to engage Britain in the policy of détente, to make it play a more active role at the European Conference. That is why I appeared at the negotiations with Wilson. I think that you, comrades, also approve the steps we took in respect to the British Prime Minister.

The beginning of negotiations with the British was not easy, even in some sense difficult. Wilson and Callaghan were capricious. It was difficult for our comrades to find agreement with them on the appropriate text of the communiqué. They did not like the formulas on the Middle East. They cited their old friendship with Israel. They did not want to say anything definite on the problem of Cyprus. In connection with the European Conference, they cited the fact that there still were many unresolved issues, and so on.

However, the persistent and sincere conversations with Wilson, the work [we] undertook with him, led to the result that we were able to finalize quite good positions on all the above-mentioned problems and on a number of other problems in the joint documents. The British stated that they were going to work for the policy of détente and improvement of British-Soviet relations energetically and constructively. They agreed to quite substantial steps in the sphere of economic relations.

^x Comrade L. I. Brezhnev did not review the transcript.

It remains to be seen, of course, how all this will be implemented in practical life. However, already those documents, which Wilson and I signed in Moscow, put serious obligations on the British government, and give us all additional political weaponry in our hands.

Later, even though I continued to feel unwell, the circumstances developed in such a way that we had to, even though for short time, meet with Cde. Husak. Gustav Nikodimovich flew to Moscow, we talked with him for several hours, had dinner together, and he left right away. Of course I was glad to have that meeting, although I clearly was not strong enough yet.

After the negotiations with Wilson, I switched to the treatment regime again, but then there was the decision that I should appear at the special session for the International Women's Day—March 8. And today, responding to the invitation from our common friend Janos Kadar, I am here, at the Congress of Hungarian Communists, and I am glad to see all of you.

I would like to tell you beforehand, dear comrades, that everything on which we reached agreement earlier--together or in the bilateral framework—remains in force. What I have in mind is to carry out (although somewhat later than initially planned) the short working meetings with comrades Gierek and Honecker, and if necessary, with other comrades as well. I think that we will be able to meet and talk before the Victory Day.

I will tell you frankly, dear comrades, today I am unable to, and I would consider it inexpedient to raise any issues of economic ties between our countries. You all remember well the recent contacts and negotiations dealing with price regulation and other problems, which were held at various levels. Even though I was not well during this period, I still took active part in all this. Our comrades—cde. Patolichev, cde. Baibakov, and others—entrusted with the task by our Politburo, put a lot of effort in order to find solutions to the problems, which would be most acceptable for all the sides.

In the process of work, which comrades Baibakov and Patolichev conducted with your comrades, we considered this issue at the Politburo several times, and we are satisfied that a seemingly good and mutually acceptable solution has been found. One cannot run away from issues raised by life itself. Cde Kadar was right when he said in his report to the Congress that we, the socialist countries, do not live somewhere in cosmos or some airless space, but we are connected with the external environment, with the world market. Therefore, we have to react in some way to the processes, which affect us.

Today I came here, figuratively speaking, with empty pockets, and I am not ready for a concrete discussion of economic problems. I don't think we should even start such discussion at this short meeting, especially since these problems require comprehensive study. Obviously, I myself, just like all of you, understand that far from all the issues are resolved. There are some loose ends remaining, we have to make our minds on some issues. Today all I want to say is that it is important to approach the economic questions from a certain party point of view, with the party patience, attention and competence.

Then it would be easier to find a solution. It would be easier to define our positions on the questions of our future five-year plans.

Naturally, we are not refusing to continue to develop our cooperation. It is not accidentally that I emphasized the importance of COMECON and other forms of our economic cooperation when I was speaking at the Congress of Hungarian comrades today.

Now we need to look at the drafts of our own five-year plan for 1976-1980. The volume of our investment, and many other things will depend on how it is going to come together. Our Gosplan promised to present its version (or versions) in 15 to 20 days. Frankly speaking, we are not yet ourselves clear regarding this plan—what do we want from it in the first place, and what we will be able to [accomplish].

We have to state honestly that we are faced with a number of difficult problems. Among them are the further improvement of the agriculture, increase of production of oil, [natural] gas, and lumber, construction of the Baikal-Amur railroad, obligations to the fraternal countries, and further improvement of the living standards of the population. In short, I think that these are mainly the same problems that each of you faces, only on a larger scale.

We cannot avoid making efforts to improve the agriculture. But it is much more difficult to do at home in the USSR than in your countries. The reasons for that are the difficult, severe, and unstable climate, the quality of the soil, and other factors. For example, a republic like Kazakhstan, with the same labor effort of the people, could produce a billion of pounds of grain one year, and 400 million—another year. It is not easy in the Ukraine either, especially this year.

In other words, first we have to undertake some serious accounting of our own to come to some clarity, and then it would be easier [for us] to respond to you.

Currently, as you know, we set a priority of raising the effectiveness of production, of increasing the return of the investment. And our investment funds are large, and even a modest step in this direction would mean a lot. In the current five-year period (which will end in 1975), for example, we set the overall volume of investment at over 500 billion dollars. These are great expenses. In order to transport [natural] gas from Tyumen to the European part, to deliver it to Bratislava or Budapest, we need huge financial and material resources. We do not have enough pipes of our own, so we have to use currency to purchase them abroad.

In short, there are many problems. We have to think seriously about how to make our economy more profitable. So far, unfortunately, the return of the investment has been decreasing. We have to think seriously about the issue of future investment. Of course, every republic and every oblast put forth some demands and proposals. The issues, which they raise, per se, are almost always correct and justified. However, from the state point of view, the picture is often quite different. As you know, we have many republics,

and many nationalities in the country, but the soviet people is one, and one needs to think about its interests as a whole first of all.

Our most important capital, and our most powerful weapon is the unity of our party, and the heartfelt support of its policy by all the people. In response to the appeal by the Central Committee to the Party and to the people, the situation of a great labor improvement has emerged in the country. Collectives of industrial enterprises, state and collective farms take increased labor commitments upon themselves, and the Central Committee receives thousands of letters.

In other words, we will have to deal seriously with all these issues upon our return to Moscow.

As far as the foreign policy plans are concerned—various visits to our country and trips to foreign states—our perspectives are also not easy. So many events are planned, and one event conflicts with another, and we cannot reject anybody. We are internationalists. The cause of relations with fraternal socialist countries is always a priority for us. We also have to give assistance to the countries of the third world. This is a requirement of high politics.

As far as our bilateral relations are concerned, I would like to emphasize here that we do not look at them as some kind of unilateral assistance from the Soviet Union to other countries. In many areas, we receive good and necessary assistance from you, and we are thankful for that. I spoke about it many times at our closed meetings, and spoke on behalf of the Central Committee publicly.

You all, comrades, of course, understand well that the questions of relations between our fraternal countries, the principles and the atmosphere of these relations have the utmost importance for our common cause. If some problems arrive somewhere, our duty as party leaders is to exhibit calm and balanced [approach], to remember about the most important things, and to monitor carefully who reports to the Central Committee leadership, and what and how they report. It is not unimportant ...

I don't want to reproach anybody here, I have no grounds for that whatsoever. But life is life. In the last 30 years, we had some difficult moments, but we always found a way to overcome those, by putting the most important—our main political goals and convictions--above the particularities. And whatever the transpiring difficulties were, we have been moving ahead, not backward. This relates to the development of the economy, improvement of lives of our peoples, and to the strengthening of our friendship. Maybe we are not moving ahead as fast as we would want in the economic realm, but the progress is obvious and indisputable. Based on our own experience, I can say that it is very bad when we earmark resources to solve some specific economic tasks, but don't provide specific materials for those amounts. That [situation] leads to freezing of the money, and the volume of unfinished construction projects is growing, and growing unjustifiably.

I think that after we ourselves take a look at what Gosplan proposes for the next five-year period, discuss the issues and come to a certain position, we will be able to continue our business conversations with you. Whether it will be at the level of the Council of Ministers or [at the level of] Gosplans, or some commissions, I cannot say now. However, I am convinced that we will come to an agreement in the end.

Yes, we have difficult tasks and problems of several kinds. This is natural. It is worse that there are some people, who quietly engage in dishonest conversations, and purposefully sow doubts or inflame passions. One day they say that Czechoslovakia is to blame, then somebody else, but mostly the USSR. It is incorrect and unfair. We work together for many years now. It is unlikely that someone could say that the Soviet Union gained great profits as a result of this collaboration to the detriment of others. I don't know about profits, but we already incurred debts to your countries. In other words, we have to find solutions to the emerging problems. Maybe we all should show more initiative, more attention to these problems on the part of the Central Committees of our parties.

However, I don't think that anybody could say that the work of the COMECON did any harm to any one of us. It is true that they write too many papers and move too slowly, but all in all, this work is necessary and useful. Maybe we should put some pressure on the officials of relevant apparatuses somewhere. Maybe we should study economic issues better ourselves. Each of us has problems in this area, and often those are different problems.

In the USSR, I repeat, one of the serious difficulties is that it is hard to ensure material supplies for the huge investments. We cannot maintain this situation any longer.

We have many difficulties, and probably sins as well. However, if we all tackle the problems with sufficient energy and attention, the affairs will improve. I was saying to our comrades here that when we deliver our oil and gas from the heartland to the western regions, then we will be able to throw in an additional cistern to each fraternal country (Laughter).

G. Husak. Our planners say that it would be necessary to throw in approximately half a million tons.

L. I. Brezhnev. The appetites are growing. In the past, I remember, your plant "Slovnaft" received 3 million tons a year, and today it wants, I think, 6 or 7 [million tons].

G. Husak. Altogether we receive 16 million tons.

V. V. Scherbitsky. This is all that our Ukraine extracts in a year.

L. I. Brezhnev. To develop new reserves is not as easy as it seemed to us earlier. One has to clear the forest, and to build housing, and schools, and movie theaters, and to build

the pipelines. I am telling you about all this so that you would cut your requests to us. (Laughter).

We also deliver supplies to Cuba. You cannot leave it without bread or fuel. We also provide clothing for the Cuban Army free of charge. And we pay special prices for their sugar. We send grain supplies to several countries. Poland and the GDR still cannot provide themselves with their own bread. In other words, there are many tasks and we have things to think about.

All this, comrades, of course, does not mean that I am telling you: "Do not ask for anything, it will not work." I only want you to have a full understanding of the complexity of the issues that we are facing.

Today, as far as I understand, we achieved a complete agreement among our countries regarding setting sliding prices for 1975 and for the subsequent five-year period. If this is acceptable for all the parties, it means that we will live for 6 more years and will achieve new successes.

I started with economic questions because it is important for everybody, for our friendship. We need to continue the work, search for new paths of integration and other forms of cooperation. We are using far from all of the opportunities.

The second very important question, dear friends—is the European Conference. All of us, our entire commonwealth should work skillfully and with great energy to bring this conference to completion successfully.

Europe's bloody history tells us a lot and puts many tasks before us. If we, Communists from socialist countries and capitalist states, in alliance with progressive, peace-loving, and realistically thinking people from other social strata eventually achieve the outcome where at the European conference the highest leaders of countries-participants sign clear and precise documents about the principles of relations between European states, it would be a great political victory. It would give new power to all proponents of peace and progress. That is why we are making all possible efforts to achieve such a goal.

President Ford told me firmly in Vladivostok that he would act as we agreed in regard to the European conference. Giscard D'Estaing (I don't know his personality very well yet) expressed himself quite definitively. Chancellor Schmidt also promised support, but his situation is not simple. Influential forces in the FRG put forward demands both in regards of West Berlin as well as the "voluntary changes of borders," and the latter in practice means –to gobble up Honecker. Those revanchists are insatiable. Lessons of history mean nothing to them. Tens of millions of people who died are not enough for them. This is the danger, which we should always remember, and which we should always counter.

Now it looks like the cause of the European Conference is on the right track. The Americans did some work, and with our assistance they were able to find an acceptable

formulation regarding the peaceful change of borders. Apparently, the coordination on this issue is coming to a conclusion.

The issue of the so-called third basket, it seems to me, is being untangled as well. The excessive and obnoxious demands of some western countries have been repelled.

Up to the last moment, the main problem was the so-called “confidence building measures,” i.e. the issues related to information about maneuvers and movements of troops, with invitation of observers and so on. I can tell you in confidence that we recently considered this complex of issues at our Politburo, and decided that it was possible to adopt a somewhat more flexible position in certain details. We gave appropriate instructions to our delegation in Geneva, which will act in close contact with your representatives. They will be informed of all the details. Therefore I will limit myself here to mentioning this issue only in general.

Now to the question of the conclusion of the Conference’s work. So far one could hear quite definitive words everywhere: “This year.” But this is too fuzzy, and we are not satisfied with it. You are already aware that we have recently appealed to the leaders of the USA, FRG, France, Britain and Italy with a proposal to act in such a way that the final stage of the European Conference could commence at the highest level on June 30 of this year. I spoke about this with Kekkonen during my conversation with him in Moscow. He expressed his support for our proposal and [said that] he would encourage other countries appropriately. Now we are waiting for responses from the leaders of the above-mentioned western countries. We believe that your countries, comrades, could provide some energetic support for the USSR proposal concerning the dates.

And there is one more consideration here. Ford, as you know, insists on my visit to the United States this summer. He has a great personal interest in it, politically. However, we tend to think that it would be inexpedient to go to America before the European Conference is completed. That is what we made clear to the Americans. Maybe it would push them a little toward the conclusion of the Conference.

Now several words about the Middle East. You are well aware of the situation there. Our position remains unchanged. Speaking about the Arabs, they, or rather some of them, recently became less conciliatory than they used to be. The latter primarily concerns Syria and the Palestinians.

We are not against agreements about further pulling back the troops at the fronts. However, it would be desirable if it would take place with some form of our participation (so that we could exert some influence over the substance). And most importantly—so that such agreements on partial measures would not become a substitute for a final settlement. Israel should not keep any part of the others’ territories, which she captured.

Kissinger persists with his efforts and trips to the Middle East. Over the next couple of days he should meet with Gromyko in Austria or in Iran. And then he will probably inform our Minister in detail.

In general, we are trying to keep you informed on this and on many other important issues. Maybe we are late with such information sometimes, but you cannot reproach us for acting not in the spirit of our common political line.

One more question. We are approaching the 30th anniversary of [our] victory over Hitler's Germany. [Our] people assign special importance to this date. Of course, celebration of the Victory Day assumes different nuances in different times. Obviously we will not celebrate this date for 200 years. One has to take into account the international situation of détente, as well as the fact that there are now entire generations of people actively living and working, who did not know the war in practice, who did not see or experience it.

We believe that while celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Victory, it would be important to emphasize that having defeated Fascism, we have been waging an active and consistent struggle for stable peace for 30 years now. We have all the reasons to be proud of the victory and by what this victory gave to the peoples. Obviously, the role of the liberation struggle of the peoples in the occupied countries, and the role of the allies of the anti-Hitler coalition will be emphasized accordingly.

In [my] conversations with Ford, Giscard D'Estaing and Wilson, I touched upon the question of the possibility of organizing some joint events scheduled for the 30th anniversary of the Victory (for example, exchange of veterans' delegations, visits of military ships etc.). If our former coalition allies officially take part in the celebration of the anniversary of the victory, it would remind peoples of many things.

As far as the celebration of the anniversary itself, we will probably eventually come to the conclusion to celebrate it as one joint holiday. After all, it is not all that important if a certain country was liberated one day earlier or later. I believe that May 9, the day of Hitler's Germany capitulation, could be considered the main date.

Comrade Kadar expressed his wish for me to come to Hungary on the dates of the 30th anniversary of the liberation of the country, and comrade Husak invited [me] to come to Czechoslovakia on Victory Day. I would like to thank [our] fraternal parties, and you personally, my dear friends, from my whole heart for this invitation. However, I see great difficulties on their road to their fulfillment. During these months we will be involved in some great and intense internal work. And the external affairs do not allow one a breathing spell. We have to prepare for the concluding stage of the European Conference, we have to think through and finally formulate our five-year plan, we have to receive numerous foreign visitors and delegations. In the nearest future, as I already mentioned, we will have to meet with comrades Honecker and Gierek. High-level delegations from several African countries are either in Moscow now, or are expected in the next several days. Prime Minister of France Chirac is arriving tomorrow, and then [we] have to prepare for a visit to the United States, and to receive President of France in our country. And this is far from a complete [list].

Therefore, I would like to thank you all once again wholeheartedly for the invitation, and for your high esteem for the role of the Soviet Union and its armed forces in bringing about our joint victory. Each one of us will probably celebrate this holiday in their own way in their countries. When we invited party and state delegations from the fraternal countries to Moscow for the anniversary celebrations, they asked us—what level of delegations did we have in mind. We still have to make the final decision on that and other questions concerning the anniversary after I return to Moscow. However, I would like to say in a preliminary way that we do not intend for the highest leaders of the fraternal countries to come to Moscow during the anniversary days. Obviously, their presence will be needed in their own countries during those days. Therefore, we were thinking that delegations with for example Politburo members, Central Committee secretaries, deputy Chairmen of the Councils of Ministers, delegations of war veterans, workers and so on will visit us for the celebration.

We plan to hold our anniversary session on the evening of May 8. I was asked to speak at the session. I believe that my speech will be very compact—only 30 to 40 minutes. The reason is that I already had the occasion to speak at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Victory, and I have already said many things. And there is no need to repeat oneself. Of course, I will pay our regards to everyone who fought for the victory—to our soldiers, to the Soviet people, to the people of other countries, and to our allies. However, a large part of the speech will be probably devoted to the general assessment of the results of the victory and to the pressing tasks of the struggle for stable peace on our planet.

Besides that, as is our tradition, other people will speak at the anniversary session too—representatives of workers, war veterans, youth and so on.

I am telling you all this in a preliminary fashion. In Moscow, we will discuss all this at the Politburo. If anything changes, we will let you know immediately, but mainly, I think, everything will look like I have just described it to you.

Of course, the foreign delegates will be received with all due respect; they will be seated in the Presidium, will take part in the reception, and will make visits to plants or collective farms.

We also discussed the question of the military parade, and we came to the conclusion that it would be inexpedient to have it. There is no need to rattle the tanks and the missiles along the square [Red Square] during the period of the intensive struggle for peace, which we started in the international arena. However, we still have to make the final decision on the issue of the parade.

I would like the comrades to understand me correctly. Of course, each of the fraternal countries deals with its own concrete conditions, and determines the forms of celebration and the events to hold, on its own.

I would like to reiterate that we will inform you about our final decisions regarding the anniversary events.

Returning to international issues, I would like to say that we are keeping an eye on the events in Portugal, and we are trying to provide possible assistance to our Portuguese friends and to all the democratic forces of that country. Currently an economic delegation from Portugal is visiting Moscow. The issues they raise will be considered with all the appropriate attention. I think that every one of our countries could do something to support the progressive revolutionary forces of Portugal, who are engaged in a difficult struggle with the reactionary forces. We have things to think about here.

As far as China is concerned, there is nothing new. Our delegation headed by cde. Ilyichev has recently returned to Beijing, held two more sessions, but with no results.

I would like to point your attention, dear comrades, to the developments in FRG. It is not all that simple there. The social democrats and the free democrats continue to lose votes. Strauss is striving for power, and we know his face very well. It is hard for me to propose anything concrete now, but we need to follow the situation in West Germany carefully and with all our attention.

It is good that the Communist party of Italy is feeling confident and continues to strengthen its authority in the country. Today, as you know, our delegation headed by cde. Kirilenko is attending their Congress. Our Italian friends, as well as the government of Italy express their interest in my visit to that country, and believe that it would be useful. In principle, we responded to the invitation of the Italian government positively, but did not establish the concrete date yet.

Now regarding the Conference of European Communist parties. We came to the point of view that it would be more expedient to hold this Conference after the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe completes its work. (Voices: "Yes!")

In short, none of us will have an easy life. Yes, we, party leaders, work, as they said at the Congress of the Hungarian comrades, not so that we could sit in comfortable chairs, or drive in nice cars. We live in order that we could give ourselves wholly to the cause of peace, security for the people, the cause of socialism and communism.

One more small practical question. In our Armed Forces, we have some units (regiments, divisions), which took part in the liberation of certain capitals and cities of the fraternal countries, and therefore were named after the cities liberated by them. The participants of those battles are not with us any more, and the numbers of those divisions and regiments do not exist any longer, but the names are kept forever. Therefore, the personnel of those units could send letters, addresses, greetings to those who live in those towns during the anniversary days. I think your comrades will consider it possible to answer those greetings in some form.

Ya. Kadar. We are very thankful for this conversation, for comrade Brezhnev telling us about some issues. These are our common issues, and it was very important for us to hear comrade Brezhnev's information. We should all think about these issues—separately and all together.

I would like to start with the question of comrade Brezhnev's health. I think I will express the common opinion of all comrades, who gathered here. We all were very worried, as human beings, as comrades, and we were very glad when Leonid Ilyich said that he was simply fatigued, that there was no specific illness. We are sincerely glad [to hear] that, and we wish Leonid Ilyich good health.

We, Hungarians, are especially grateful to Leonid Ilyich for finding it possible to come to our party congress. It is important not only for the Hungarian Communists, it has a great international importance.

I would like to wish you good health once again from the bottom of my heart. You should remember that your health belongs not just to you, but to your party, and your people, and to us all.

As much as possible, try to follow some [healthy] schedule.

(The rest of the participants support cde. Kadar)

L. I. Brezhnev. Thank you very much.

Ya. Kadar. Leonid Ilyich was saying about the development of the five-year plan in the USSR. We all want the economic issues in the Soviet Union to be resolved in the best manner. The power of the Soviet Union is the power of us all. The relations between the Soviet Union and our countries can be compared to the relations between the powerful oak tree and the young undergrowth. We would not be able to live without the Soviet Union.

However, we cannot live like parasites on the Soviet Union either. We should be talking about cooperation, precisely, i.e. about working together. Of course there will be requests from us in the future, such is Soviet Union's fate. But we should do everything we can to help ourselves.

There were periods when we relied on the USSR reserves completely. However, we should understand what the Soviet comrades have been telling us recently. We have to see that the Soviet Union has its own problems. When cde. Baibakov visited us here, we had a conversation, and I looked at him, and thought that it is not easy for him, cde. Baibakov, either. He has to take into account not only the needs of his own country, but also he has to think about the problems of the fraternal countries. We understand you. We want to cooperate in the closest and the most correct way. Everything we can do ourselves, we will do.

As far as the European Conference is concerned, here we have been acting together, and we will be acting together, fully coordinating our actions.

We also want to celebrate the Victory Day, May 9. Not so long ago, in Hungary celebration of this date could have created a problem, but now the situation is completely different. Today there is no division in our commonwealth into the countries-winners and the defeated countries.

In the nearest future we will have a number of joint events. We agree to discuss the COMECON issues collectively, and ultimately at the highest level. The session of the PCC [Political Consultative Committee] on the anniversary of the Warsaw Treaty is coming. We also completely agree that it would be better to convene the conference of European Communist parties after the completion of work of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation.

I would like to express one more thought. Initially we were thinking that we should not publish any statements about this meeting, so that we don't offend those comrades who are not taking part in it. But they all know that we were due to meet over these days, they would not understand if such a meeting did not take place. Therefore, it would be quite all right to publish a communiqué about this friendly meeting. We also have a purely formal basis for having a meeting in this composition: those First Secretaries of Communist Parties of the socialist countries, who were presently in Budapest had a meeting. (Other participants express their agreement).

L. I. Brezhnev. I would ask the comrades to please have in mind that although I was really not well for some time, back home we firmly decided not to say anything about it publicly. I will need appropriate regime for some time to remove the fatigue. I have nothing else. I am grateful to the comrades for their concern about my health, and I would like to use this occasion to state that I am a fighter, and I will be so till the end. (Applause of the participants).

I would like to mention two more issues.

When should we hold our XXV Congress? Some factors are in favor of holding it already in the end of 1975, but there are some problems with it. If we finally settle the question of the five-year plan completely, then probably it would be better to hold the congress in the end of the year. Some comrades think that it would be better to hold it in February 1976. We have not made a final decision on this issue. Of course what matters is not the timetable but the program, which we will present at the congress.

This is more or less all I wanted to say to the comrades today. Thank you very much for coming. As far as the press statement about our meeting is concerned, I propose entrusting our Hungarian comrades with preparation of a draft of this statement.

Participants of the meeting agree with this proposal. With this the meeting adjourns.

Recorded by: [Signature] (A. Alexandrov)

[*Source: U.S. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Dmitrii A. Volkogonov Papers, Reel 16, Container 24*]

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