

Document 7. Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev regarding Erich Honecker
October 11, 1989

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Today M.S. met with Rakowski (the Polish Premier [sic]). I was not present, but read the record of his meeting with Jaruzelski and Rakowski in Berlin. One on one, M.S. said to them and Honecker some things that he probably should not have said. He was playing along, or maybe paying tribute to whatever orthodoxy is left in him when he said that the PUWP and the HSWP have lost, let things get away, receded from the positions of socialism.

He did not say this to the Hungarians. As for the Poles, he agrees with them when they say it themselves.

Record of conversation with Honecker... when speaking with me and Shakhnazarov, M.S. called him scumbag [mudak]. M.S. said, "He could have said to his people that he has had 4 operations, he is 78, he does not have the strength to fill his position, so could they please 'let him go,' he has done his duty. Then, maybe, he would have remained an esteemed figure in history." Shakhnazarov and I were doubtful that he would get a place in history if he did this right now. Two-three years ago, maybe. Right now he is already in a position similar to Kadar's. He has been cursed by his people.

The PB in Berlin is meeting for the second day. Krenz asked our ambassador to convey to M.S. that he will raise the question about change. Honecker warned Krenz that should he do this, they will be enemies. But it looks like he did it anyway. What will come of it?

The day before yesterday, Kohl tried to speak with M.S. over the phone. Yesterday I reminded M.S. about this, but he brushed it aside--he did not want to. Today he called me and said: "go ahead, put the call through..." As soon as I reached for the phone, he called again: "Should I? The results of the Berlin PB are not clear yet. And in general..."

I told him that he should, otherwise it would be awkward. Plus, I am sure that he is calling to disassociate himself from his statements regarding reunification (in connection to the flight of GDR citizens to the FRG).

The conversation lasted 17 minutes. Kohl promised to help in Hungary and Poland, planned a visit to Warsaw, and most importantly--assured M.S. that he will not destabilize the GDR. M.S. replied: "This is a very important statement. I will take it into consideration." They talked about bilateral economic ties in follow up to M.S.' visit to Bonn.

[Source: Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary, Manuscript. On file at the National Security Archive. Translated by Anna Melyakova.]