

Session of the Politburo of the CC CPSU  
29 June 1985

Chair: cde. Gorbachev M. S.  
Present: cdes. Aliev G. A., Vorotnikov V. I., Grishin V. V.,  
Gromyko A. A., Kunaev D. A., Ligachev Ye. K.,  
Ryzhkov N. I., Solomentsev M. S., Tikhonov N. A.,  
Chebrikov V. M., Scherbitsky V. V., Demichev P. N.,  
Dolgikh V. I., Kuznetsov V. V., Ponomarev B. N.,  
Sokolov S. L., Shevardnadze E. A., Zimyanin M. V.,  
Kapitonov I. V., Nikonov V. P., Rusakov K. V.

Questions of the Plenum of the CC CPSU

GORBACHEV. At the Plenum of the CC CPSU we intend to consider questions of the forthcoming session of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

The agenda for the session includes issues of protecting the environment, report of the Procurator General of the USSR and approval of Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

As you recall, when we were deciding to convene the session, the Politburo decided to also consider organizational issues during the session. The most important of them is the election of the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

We know that before 1977 the positions of General Secretary of the CC CPSU and the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet were not occupied by the same person. Subsequently, they were joined and occupied by one person. One has to say that in that concrete situation it was justified.

POLITBURO MEMBERS. Correct.

GORBACHEV. However, appointment of personnel, including at the highest echelon—is a dynamic business. It is always connected to the tasks that are decided at a certain stage of developing processes. Today we are launching big projects, moving on the course of accelerating the economic and social development of the country. We are facing tasks that are great in scale. In this connection, the volume of work of the party and its Central Committee, the Politburo, is also increasing.

In these conditions, it would be obviously expedient to have the General Secretary of the CC CPSU concentrate on the issues of party leadership of the society, on uniting all the efforts of party, state and economic organs and public organizations on resolving key issues, devoting more time to those sectors of our development, where the future of the country is being decided.

In this connection, I am putting forward a proposal to recommend cde. A. A. Gromyko for election to the position of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Andrei Andreevich is one of the oldest party members, he has great political experience, he is well-

known both in our country and in the world. He is characterized by his party mentality, statesman-like approach to work and loyalty to collective leadership.

As far as the positive features in the work of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the entire system of soviets lately, we should develop them further, continue the line toward elevating their role and responsibilities.

All this corresponds to the current situation, to the consideration of the most rational appointment of forces taking into account of the current tasks. What do you think about this, comrades?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. We support [it].

GROMYKO. I would like to express my gratitude and thank Mikhail Sergeyevich, and all of you, comrades, for the decision to recommend me at the session of the Supreme Soviet for the position of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. I promise that I will not let you down.

VOROTNIKOV. At this time, the decision not to have one person occupy these two positions is correct.

LIGACHEV. This decision shows the unity and the cohesion of the Politburo. This is very important.

GORBACHEV. This is true. Now we face a question: who should we nominate as Minister of Foreign Affairs? We will not be able to find a second A. A. Gromyko with his experience, his knowledge of problems of foreign policy. But even Andrei Andreevich himself at some point started his career in diplomacy without such experience and knowledge as he has now. At the Tehran conference he, of course, was not the person he is now.

I spoke with Andrei Andreevich about who we should nominate to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. We have many qualified diplomats. Kornienko is an experienced official. Maltsev is somewhat weaker. Chervonenko worked in diplomatic as well as party positions. Dobrynin is one of the people we looked at. And yet, our thoughts went in a different direction. We need a known quantity for the post of the Minister, a person from our own circle, whom we know well and in whom we trust.

GROMYKO. We raised an entire cohort of diplomats.

GORBACHEV. As a result we came to a conclusion that we should recommend Eduard Amvrosievich Shevardnadze. I spoke to him. He told me that he could have expected anything but not this [turn of events]. He is a fully formed public figure, a principled person, who understands the interests of the party. Eduard Amvrosievich showed himself to be a person of character, balanced, capable to find solutions to problems.

We have to keep one more important issue in mind: our country is multinational, and we must make sure that it would be reflected in the composition of the central party organs.

I am convinced, comrades, that this is the right decision. What do you think about it?

GROMYKO. I propose to support [the nomination]. Cde. Shevardnadze is a member of the central leadership. This is important for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

GORBACHEV. We need to treat the MID (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) the way it deserves.

GROMYKO. Lenin used to say that the MID is a department of the Central Committee.

PONOMAREV. And the international situation requires a strong leader.

GORBACHEV. I am convinced that we will make the right move by nominating cde. Shevardnadze to the position of Foreign Minister.

LIGACHEV. We support.

GORBACHEV. Due to his personal qualities and in connection of his nomination to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, it would be expedient to promote cde. Shevardnadze from candidate to [full] member of the Politburo.

GROMYKO. It will be well-received.

GORBACHEV. So what should we do, comrades?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. We support it.

SHEVARDNADZE. I thank you, comrades, for your trust [in me]. That the Politburo is engaged in the MID issues is the most important thing for the Minister. I will try to study the issues, understand them deeply, I will do everything in order not to let you down.

[Source: Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Fond 89. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive]