

**Speech at the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee
Bucharest, 25-26 November 1976**

[EXCERPTS]

Dear Comrades,

First of all, allow me to convey the fraternal greetings of the party and state leadership of the German Democratic Republic to all the participants in our meeting. We would like to most sincerely thank our Romanian comrades and especially Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu for their great hospitality and the excellent working conditions that they have provided.

The party and state leadership of the German Democratic Republic is pleased with the convocation, as agreed, of this meeting of the Warsaw Treaty's Political Consultative Committee. The time was ripe for a meeting at this level. It provides us with an opportunity to discuss issues related to the ongoing struggle for freedom, security and cooperation in light of recent international developments. In the wake of the Helsinki Conference and the Berlin Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, our meeting's results will undoubtedly be of great importance for the consolidation of peaceful coexistence and the establishment of a more profound détente in Europe. After each of these events, the international community, the peoples of the world, have paid greater attention to the socialist community's joint position and took our decisions into account in determining their own policies. We are certain that this will be the case this time as well.

Comrade Leonid Ilich Brezhnev has provided an outstanding analysis of the changes that are currently taking place in the international arena. These positive changes can be attributed, above all, to the steady growth in power of the Soviet Union and our entire socialist commonwealth, along with our coordinated foreign policy. Therefore, it is in the national interest of every country, as well as our common interest, that our fraternal countries cooperate ever more closely and thus further increase the impact of our actions for the sake of a stable peace. With the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, we have tried and true instruments of political, economic, and military collaboration at our disposal. We welcome the creation, foreseen in our draft resolution, of the Committee of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Unified Secretariat of the Warsaw Treaty as a very useful step in keeping with the current state of our cooperation.

The draft declaration, “For New Results in International Détente, for a New Face of Europe,” meets with our full approval. It will allow us to keep the initiative firmly in our hands and develop it further with regard to the fundamental questions in the struggle for peace and the deepening of détente, security and mutually-beneficial cooperation on our continent. The German Democratic Republic will, as before, contribute constructively to the achievement of these goals.

Despite the complicated and contradictory nature of the current situation, détente remains the main trend internationally. The system of European treaties¹ and the success of the Helsinki Conference represent a gain of historic significance for the cause of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems. The territorial and political realities that arose from the outcome of the Second World War and post-war developments have received multilateral confirmation in international law. The codex of Helsinki principles have laid a firm foundation for the shaping of a peaceful Europe. Our continent has begun to play a completely different role in international life from the one that it played in the past, when an imperialist policy of aggression triggered devastating world wars. If we succeed in adding further decades of peace to those that lie behind us, this will be of inestimable importance for the cause of peace and human progress internationally.

As experience has shown, the constructive and realistic nature of the agreements concluded between the European states is already having a beneficial effect on international relations. We have succeeded in making significant progress in the solution of more than a few problems that darkened the lives of the peoples on our continent during the Cold War. This has provided convincing proof of both the usefulness and the possibilities of détente. Also, it has confirmed our assessment of this process as one with objective foundations, the most important of which is the political, economic and military power of socialism and the joint action of the fraternal socialist states.

We are not overlooking the fact that this process still faces serious difficulties. Since the Helsinki Conference, those imperialist forces that already opposed the policy of peaceful coexistence before the conference have strengthened their resistance and gone over to massive counterattacks. They openly admit that, given the crisis in which capitalism finds itself, they are fearful of peaceful competition and see better chances for their systemic struggle with socialism in a return to the Cold War. As has been noted with all the necessary clarity in our draft declaration, they are launching wild attacks against the

¹ Transl. note: Honecker is apparently referring to the treaties and agreements that the FRG concluded with the Soviet Union, Poland, the GDR, and the ČSSR as part of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt’s “new *Ostpolitik*.”

territorial and political realities that have emerged as a result of the Second World War and postwar developments. They do not consider the principles worked out and agreed upon at Helsinki, which conform to the requirements for peace, to be a permanent foundation for inter-state relations at all. They talk of peace, but prepare for war. Also connected with this is the rise in right-wing tendencies in several capitalist states, which is working against détente and its further spread. In the military sphere, the ruling circles in the imperialist states are fueling the arms race. They are using an alleged “threat from the East” to justify NATO’s accelerated arms buildup.

In Angola, the Middle East, and other parts of the world, these forces have provoked bloody confrontations. In Latin America, they are increasing their efforts to cobble together a fascist bloc of states. They are trying to intervene in the South Atlantic, the Indian Ocean and Africa, to bring NATO directly into play, and to conclude new pacts for war. In the political and diplomatic spheres, these forces are constantly initiating new attempts to distort the commitments made in the [recent] treaties, to selectively interpret the Helsinki Final Act, and to falsify it for their own goals, hostile to détente. This has led repeatedly to dangerous confrontations, which have necessitated decisive, but well-considered and flexible actions on our part. The German Democratic Republic, due to its geographic and political position, finds itself confronted on practically a daily basis with this situation. Each of our moves in this regard is determined by the coordinated foreign policy of our fraternal community and serves the peace and security interests of our people and our construction of socialism.

Increasingly, influential forces in the imperialist states are exacerbating anticommunism in all its variations, especially anti-Sovietism. That is their ideological platform in their struggle against détente. They present their direct intervention in the internal affairs of other states – such as Portugal, Italy or France – as their legitimate right.

We agree with Comrade Leonid Il’ich Brezhnev’s assessment of the policies of the major imperialist countries and the conclusions he draws for the socialist states’ relations with these countries. Our experience also shows that relations with these states are developing positively overall, despite some remaining obstacles. Since the Helsinki meeting, the German Democratic Republic has concluded 45 treaties and agreements with around 20 states participating in the European security conference. Currently, negotiations are underway for an additional 40 agreements. Of particular importance for the normalization of the German Democratic Republic’s relations with the aforementioned states has been the conclusion of consular agreements with Austria, Finland and Great Britain, along with cultural agreements with Finland and Denmark. Since Helsinki, progress has been

made in developing the German Democratic Republic's relations with Italy, France and the United States.

The relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany are of integral importance for achieving peaceful coexistence and guaranteeing European security. As we all know, in the recent *Bundestag*² elections the SPD³ and the FDP⁴ achieved a weakened, yet still just sufficient parliamentary majority for a continuation of their coalition. The election results are well known. I just want to draw attention to one aspect, which seems important for our future common policy. On the one hand, with regard to foreign policy, the election results demonstrate the desire of a large part of the FRG's population to maintain peace and thus to continue the so-called *Ostpolitik* of the present governing coalition of the SPD and the FDP. On the other hand, the vote of every second citizen of the Federal Republic eligible to vote went to the CDU⁵ or the CSU⁶ -- i.e., was clearly right wing. Even if one takes into account the factor of demagogy, this shows that revanchist, militaristic and neo-Nazi tendencies are influencing extensive parts of the FRG's population and must be taken seriously.

The formation of the new government and its policy declaration are expected shortly. One can only hope that Bonn will take to heart one of the lessons learned from the election campaign -- namely, that any policy that infringes upon the sovereignty and the borders of the German Democratic Republic—which we, of course, cannot leave unanswered—narrows the basis of support for the SPD/FDP coalition and increases the room for maneuver for the politics of open confrontation.

In the future, too, it will be of decisive importance to integrate the FRG ever more firmly into the process of détente and to see to it that it fulfills the treaties and agreements that it has entered into. Overall, we believe that the results of the FRG's Bundestag elections have opened up possibilities that are by no means unfavorable for the common foreign policy of our socialist community. As before, we will do everything possible to this end, but at the same time not relent for one moment in the watchfulness that is required.

As we continue to push through the principles of peaceful co-existence in our relations with the FRG, we are of the opinion that we should support the realistic trends in the

² Transl. note: The West German parliament.

³ Transl. note: The Social Democratic Party of Germany.

⁴ Transl. note: The liberal Free Democratic Party.

⁵ Transl. note: Christian Democratic Union.

⁶ Transl. note: Christian Social Union, the Bavarian sister-party of the CDU.

FRG's policy and exploit them in the interests of peace by proceeding constructively and forcefully. At the same time, it is important to clearly oppose the FRG's efforts to reinterpret the commitments in the system of European treaties and the Helsinki Final Act to revanchist ends. Also in the struggle against all revanchist organizations and associations, including imperialist broadcasting centers like "Radio Liberty" and "Radio Free Europe," it seems to us that the closest co-ordination and mutual exchange of information is urgently needed so that we can proceed offensively.

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Dear Comrades!

Before us lies the common task of consolidating political détente and complementing it with military détente. By further expanding the system of treaties; holding high-level political consultations and summits; actively supporting the proposal of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for all-European conferences on environmental protection, transport, and energy; and actively collaborating in all other appropriate measures, we are helping to bind the governments of the imperialist states ever more effectively to the policy of peaceful co-existence. At the same time we are making it ever more difficult for the most reactionary and aggressive forces to block or slow down the movement toward peace.

In this regard, the Belgrade meeting will also present us with new opportunities. We also consider it necessary to present a united front in Belgrade in order to better guarantee that the capitalist states fulfill all parts of the Helsinki Final Act. The German Democratic Republic will do everything in its power to contribute to the success of this consultative meeting. We resolutely reject all attempts to lend this meeting the character of a "complaints hearing" or a "review conference." We are decisively opposed to conceptions that seek to talk to death or dilute the positive results of the Helsinki summit in Belgrade. A task of particular importance is the struggle to halt the arms race and for effective disarmament measures. Together with the other socialist states, the German Democratic Republic is actively working to realize the proposals that the Soviet Union presented to the 31st United Nations General Assembly. The Soviet Union's comprehensive document of September 28, 1976, on halting the arms race and on disarmament contains measures to this end that are both necessary and realistic. This broad, all-encompassing program, which also reflects the views of a great number of other states on these matters, has strengthened the offensive position of the states of the socialist community and broadened the platform for struggle for all progressive forces.

Of great significance and import is the new proposal distributed to us today by Comrade Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev, under which all the states participating in the all-European conference would sign a treaty not to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Ending the arms race and bringing about disarmament will require no small amount of energy, endurance and perseverance. The more we succeed in mobilizing the peoples for these goals, the greater our success will be. In our opinion, holding a world disarmament conference in the near future would be a decisive step in the right direction.

We attach particular importance to the realization of the proposals to counter the dangers resulting from weapons of mass destruction and to conclude a worldwide agreement on renunciation of force. Such an agreement would represent an effective international means for reigning in the forces hostile to détente in the imperialist states.

In the interest of securing peace and relations based on peaceful coexistence, we must succeed, through our combined efforts, in getting imperialism to engage further in serious negotiations with constructive results. Also, with regard to the matters that we will be considering under our second agenda item, we consider it expedient to charge our foreign ministers with developing concrete ideas, especially for our common approach at the UN, in the Geneva Disarmament Committee, and with regard to the non-aligned and imperialist states.

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At the same time, we also consider it necessary to support even more effectively the activities of democratic international mass organizations and other social forces, in order to make the fight against the arms race and for effective disarmament, for the solution of the Middle East conflict, and for an even more successful struggle of the peoples of Southern Africa against racism and colonialism. For instance, we would consider it expedient to organize worldwide initiatives for the cessation of the arms race and a world disarmament conference and to create national committees to support the struggle of the peoples of Southern Africa. We will maintain and strengthen our solidarity with the Arab peoples and the patriots in the countries of Latin America who are persecuted by fascist regimes.

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[Translation from the German by Ursula Froese]