

Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary, 1976

January 3, 1976

[...]

Andropov presented a note to the Politburo on the situation with “dissidents” in the USSR. According to him, Soviet people are surprised when they hear on the radio that the PCF¹ suddenly started defending [Leonid] Plyushch and [Andrei] Sakharov and in general hounding the CPSU about “having political prisoners in the USSR.” The note doesn’t say what to do about it. I got the impression that the hidden agenda of the note was to justify before the Central Committee the fact that we “have to keep doing it” despite protests from our partners in détente.

The document contained interesting data: over the last ten years, 1500 people have been arrested for anti-Soviet activities. When Khrushchev announced to the world in 1954 that the Soviet Union has no political prisoners, there were at least 1400. In 1976 there are about 850 political prisoners, 261 of them on charges of anti-Soviet propaganda. I was struck by the following number: the KGB has seen 68,000 people “prophylactically” [*профилактированных*], i.e. people summoned to the KGB and warned about the “unacceptability” of their activities. Over 1800 anti-Soviet groups and organizations uncovered through “penetration” have been given warnings. Overall, in Andropov’s opinion, there are hundreds of thousands of people in the Soviet Union who either are acting against the Soviet regime or are prepared to do so under the right circumstances.

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

¹ French Communist Party, *Parti communiste français*