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Record of the Joint Session of the Politburo and the Council of Ministers  
March 8, 1968

1. Transcript regarding the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty in Sofia.

Comrade Jenő Fock:

In the name of the delegation returning from Sofia, I warmly welcome the members of the Politburo and the Council of Ministers on the occasion of the two bodies' joint meeting. Comrade Kádár has something to say about our work there.

Comrade János Kádár:

First, I want to convey warm greetings from the Bulgarian comrades and the fraternal parties and governments that participated in the conference. We requested the convocation of this joint meeting because we must formulate positions regarding certain issues and pass resolutions; moreover, we are holding a joint meeting for the sake of rationality and saving time.

I would like to begin by stating that both the Politburo and the Council of Ministers will receive, as usual, the regular, normal written material on the delegation's work; the current one [presentation] is for preliminary information only.

The meeting of the Warsaw Treaty Political Consultative Committee convened and lasted for two days before it ended. There were three issues on the agenda that had been agreed upon in advance -- namely, the issue of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, about which the Romanian comrades had proposed and demanded a discussion; the formulation of our position regarding the Vietnam issue, which was our common wish; and finally -- also at the request of several parties -- the presentation of a report by the Supreme Commander of the Warsaw Treaty.

Regarding the meeting as a whole, I would like to say that, to some extent, even this meeting reflected the recurring divergence of views and opinions between the Romanian party, on one hand, and the remaining Treaty members, on the other.

There was a detailed, wide-ranging discussion on the nuclear test ban [sic] treaty. We held a discussion that did not last as long regarding the well-needed public position on Vietnam; it concluded with a unanimous resolution. On the third point, the report by the Supreme Commander of the Warsaw Treaty contained certain ideas about the development of the organization of the supreme commander and his staff but since that there was no meeting of the minds on this score, we unanimously decided to postpone deliberations on this issue. The

Supreme Commander of the unified organ and the individual ministers of defense were given a six-month deadline.

As far as the nuclear test ban [sic] treaty is concerned, there was quite a decisive difference of opinion between the Romanian side, on the one hand, and the remaining participants on the other, which we were unable to work out. Two divergent views arose. I will mention a couple of elements of this in order to clarify where the fundamental difference lies concerning the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

The comrades are all aware that this question has been on the agenda of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee for a long time. After lengthy preparations, disputes, and talks, there are two, but nonetheless coordinated drafts before the eighteen-nation committee, one of which was tabled by the Soviet Union, and the other by the opposing camp. The term for the committee's making a final decision on the issue is about to expire, and it must present its recommendation to the United Nations General Assembly by the deadline of July 15. The Romanians had various reservations and proposals for modifying the coordinated text of the draft agreement, which was primarily a Soviet proposal. These Romanian proposals concerned substantive issues – they were not about stylistic things – and basically, these proposals were largely in the interest of the socialist and peace-loving forces. The nature of the proposals was as follows. First, at present the draft treaty does not contain an obligation by the powers that possess nuclear arms to destroy atomic weapons. There is no such obligation. The Romanian proposal sought to obtain an obligation by the nuclear powers to eliminate their nuclear weapons -- more precisely, to cease production initially and then to destroy the existing weapons arsenal and delivery vehicles.

Another significant proposal concerned the matter of a guarantee. The Romanian proposal sought to obtain an obligation by the powers with nuclear arsenals not to use such weapons against non-nuclear countries.

The third significant reservation concerned oversight of the obligations contained in the treaty. According to the draft agreement, the non-nuclear countries that join the agreement should undertake certain inspection procedures for themselves -- namely, that activities of a nuclear character conducted on their territories would be inspected to determine whether these activities are of a military nature. In this regard, the Romanians demanded the drafting of a proposal to modify this control provision so that a given state's nuclear activities would be inspected only if they quantitatively or qualitatively reached a certain threshold at which the material produced could be used for weapons purposes. And the treaty says something else.

The fourth important comment: According to the draft, the treaty would expire in 25 years. In five years, they would review its implementation and then adopt a position regarding the treaty's future implementation. In this case, there is a Romanian proposal to convene a wide-ranging conference in five years at which all states would be represented. If it observes no progress in halting the arms race and reducing nuclear arms, then, as early as five years from now, the basic elements of the treaty would be debated.

The other six delegations at the meeting unanimously resolved: We support the soonest possible entry into force of the draft nuclear nonproliferation treaty before the Eighteen-Nation

Disarmament Committee. The Romanians finally declared that since we could not reach an agreement, despite the results of the debate, they would submit their own proposals to the eighteen-nation committee in a few days.

What was the essential difference between the viewpoints? The “six,” including us, stated that the Romanian proposals are suitable, that most of them could be supported or accepted. But they are not realistic and there is no chance whatsoever that the other side will accept them and integrate them into the treaty.

Although there were also some Romanian proposals that were not so good, their idealistic aim was the most important [thing]; this is nice, but it has no basis in reality.

The rest of us believe that the present world situation is favorable for a variety of reasons, including the United States’ own clear support and interest in concluding a nuclear nonproliferation treaty. At this point, something else is playing a role: it is possible that the United States intends to preserve a monopoly vis-à-vis the other capitalist states. Moreover, the domestic political situation in the United States is such that the government is obligated to its own people, and it is in its political interest to have a propaganda piece to demonstrate its interest in peace somewhere, somehow. It is our general view that if we prolong the talks and strive to improve the treaty in a situation where this cannot be done, this could result in no agreement at all. If we proceed like this, we will not be able to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, in evaluating the situation, it is important to know that at present there are six to eight states that, if they set their mind to it, could produce nuclear weapons. These states include West Germany, Japan, – for certain specific reasons Israel – along with Brazil, India and others. And if we cannot erect any barriers, nuclear weapons will proliferate, and because of the nature of things among the imperialist powers, the danger of war will increase. The prospect of imperialist, revanchist states obtaining nuclear weapons within ten years or so is a disquieting prospect for the interests of the socialist states and their peoples. Our debate revolved more or less around this.

The draft treaty before the committee is in its most important elements the maximum that realistically can be achieved and the socialist countries, both individually and jointly, share an interest in its realization.

One should not exaggerate, but if we put differently what was said there, the Romanian position, one can say, means all or nothing. It would be better, they said, not to have any treaty at all, if it is not what we want; but the rest of us believe that something is better than nothing. This is the real difference between our positions.

With that, I am more or less done with the briefing. There is no need for further elaboration; the [written] report will contain further important elements.

We asked the comrades to hear the briefing partly because we want to say that our delegation, in keeping with its mandate, affirmed that the Hungarian People’s Republic supports the rapid conclusion of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, along with the efforts to bring this about. For its part, the Hungarian People’s Republic is ready to accept a nuclear nonproliferation treaty if one is signed.

We need not take a stand on this immediately, today – it could wait until next Thursday or longer as far as we are concerned, because we are not on the committee [ENDC]. (Otherwise, of the countries represented, five are on the committee; only we and the GDR are not.)

There is another issue for which I would like to obtain the comrades' approval.

The atmosphere at the meeting was not exactly like a wedding feast; there was a debate about wording, about positions; there were sharp debates in general, and since there were two separate and completely opposed positions, we repeatedly held consultations about the situation during the disputes, including how to proceed in general and how to conclude the meeting. We met separately on several occasions and formulated positions regarding several questions.

One such position: at the consultative meeting we wanted it to be a regular consultative meeting, which would conclude with a resolution acceptable to everyone that could be put into a communiqué. Given the divergent positions, the formulation states that the participants in the consultative meeting discussed the nonproliferation treaty and expressed their views. That's it. There was nothing else in common regarding this question.

Since the Romanian comrades have already aired their position to the public at large, and since it is clear that they will forcefully propagandize it at the UN and throughout the world, the other six [states] deemed it necessary to assert their own position separately. Thus, this is not a resolution of the [Political Consultative] Committee. However, we discussed it and agreed one night that the six of us would issue a very brief political communiqué regarding this issue, the essence of which is that the six of us support the rapid conclusion of the treaty. We agreed to this.

Thus, if you'll allow, I will let you in on what it's all about. In the communiqué the Bulgarian People's Republic, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union in the spirit of full understanding express their position concerning the issue of curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. (This is a hastily-prepared communiqué; please disregard the style.) There are statements such as: [...] <sup>1</sup> Then, there is a general reference in which the named countries express their hope that all countries will contribute to solving the nonproliferation problem.

We agreed that all the delegations would go home – we were the last delegation to leave – and that until 9 p.m. tonight we would keep things under embargo, but after that, it could be disclosed.

Although there is no tense or serious difference of opinion about this matter, one must consider that this is the first time in the history of the Warsaw Treaty that the member-states are presenting divergent positions. In full awareness and knowledge of this, we support the declaration's publication and ask the comrades to approve it as a policy in accordance with the policy of the Central Committee and the Government.

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<sup>1</sup> Here Kádár reads excerpts from the "Statement Supporting the Soviet Draft Nonproliferation Treaty," 9 March 1968, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17974&navinfo=14465>.

I must also mention that the various differences of opinion on various questions that have arisen more and more frequently as of late have made some of the member-states impatient, and to some extent we saw developments similar to the consultative meeting in Budapest. The Polish delegation was extremely sharp during the talks, and serious clashes occurred between the Polish and the Romanian delegations. Our delegation was prepared to assert its own position, if need be, but we were not about to let emotional elements loosen the treaty or tear it apart. The Central Committee and the government obviously must remain concerned about basic issues regarding the [Warsaw] Treaty, but it would not be expedient to raise matters this way or to let things reach the point of whether we continue to cooperate with the Romanians at all or not.

I ask the esteemed Politburo and Council of Ministers to accept this briefing as a preliminary report and to agree with the basic statement that we should facilitate the prompt conclusion of the nonproliferation treaty – to the extent that it depends upon our contribution.

I also ask that the Hungarian People's Republic affirm its position on this question in a separate communiqué, which of course will take a form that will not be insulting in any way.

Technically, we should proceed in such a way that the adoption of an extraordinary, joint resolution might not be necessary; instead, both committees should put a few sentences about this on the record with today's date when they next meet.

Comrade Jenő Fock:

There is an important thing that Comrade Kádár forgot. Of course, there will be something written up about all these things in the Politburo, the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee, but we must still mention two important things.

Comrade Kádár has already mentioned one – in actual fact, this is why we have come together. The six countries have their own separate position, and this is the first time this has happened at a meeting of the Warsaw Treaty's Political Consultative Committee. That such a duality was established at a meeting of the Warsaw Treaty's Political Consultative Committee is a significant divergence. Thus, there is a joint declaration, and in addition, the six countries – which could have met elsewhere even in three days – established their position in a common declaration. For a while at the meeting we, together with some other countries, took the line that we could discuss our position at home under calmer circumstances and could present the same [position] as we stated there. But the majority thought that since we were together and we could state in a brief page what we thought, perhaps we could have a greater impact on the Romanians and the further course of our work without causing a schism in the Warsaw Treaty.

The other very significant issue—Comrade Kádár has already mentioned it, we attributed significance to it and the Soviet comrades also realized the necessity of it—is that the Romanians should not learn about the six countries' intention from the press. It was important, we thought, that they should find out about our intentions from us -- namely, that we would meet and publish a joint declaration. We asked the hosts, and the Soviet delegation informed the Romanians what was going on. Comrade Ceaușescu said that he agreed that each member-country could have its

own opinion, and although he would have preferred to see us state it individually, he theoretically could not have anything against our reaching an agreement and announcing it. We were careful to be fair and not to give the Romanians a reason to see a schism or even to work towards that end.

Nonetheless, there is a need to talk and take a position because this is the first time that something like this has happened in the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty – even if this is not the case, to the public it seems so. At [the] Budapest [meeting], they declared that they would assemble in Sofia, and although no one walked out, a few hours later, the six countries expressed a joint position.

Comrade Antal Apró:

What is the American position concerning the draft?

Comrade János Kádár:

This is a coordinated draft, which the United States, for various reasons, considers to be in its own interest. The various groups are working at full speed. For example, they [the U.S.] had a major dispute with the FRG and other close allies. In addition, there are other circles and groups, which – with reasons similar to the Romanians – take exception to the treaty. For example, India with regard to the question of guarantees. The issue is very complicated.

The main thing is that we have a coordinated text. The U.S. will make its allies support it; the Soviet Union is backed by its own allies; and humanity also has an interest that fifteen states should not have nuclear weapons. And there is hope that it will be possible to garner a two-thirds majority at the session of the General Assembly this fall.

Comrade Jenő Fock:

I ask the Council of Ministers to permit us to put these few sentences into writing with tomorrow's date.

Transcribed by Margit Fehér

*[Translation by László Borhi]*