

Strictly confidential

Note for HSWP First Secretary János Kádár
Regarding the Budapest Meeting of the Warsaw Treaty Political Consultative Committee,
March 17, 1969

I.

1/ The meeting had been postponed from November 1968 because the Romanians had wanted to further modify Article 12/a of the resolution regarding a Unified Command.

2/ The new date – March 17 – had already been discussed by Comrades Kádár and Brezhnev on March 6. Originally, they had a one-day meeting in mind, with two agenda items:

- Signing of the five military documents
- Approval of a political document appraising the present international situation
- Proclamation to the peoples of Europe [transl.: added by hand].

3/ On March 9, Comrade Firiubin¹ transmitted the draft declaration and proclamation. The two documents were composed in such a way that the declaration contained an appraisal of all current international issues (NATO's activity, the FRG, the Middle East, Vietnam; it even condemned the Chinese for border violators without citing them by name). The [draft] proclamation, while avoiding disputed points, emphasized the need to convene a European security conference and recommended the convocation of a preparatory committee. The Hungarian side presented this to the foreign ministries of the [Warsaw Pact] member-states on March 11 as its own proposal.

4/ On March 13, Comrade Firiubin arrived and met with Comrades Kádár and Komócsin. Firiubin discussed planning for the technical aspects of the meeting and signaled that at the meeting's conclusion, the Soviet delegation plans to propose that the members next consider the issue of improving the Warsaw Treaty's political organization. Comrade Kádár stressed that given recent events, the very fact that the Political Consultative Committee is convening has political significance. The main focus should be on signing the military documents. In drafting the political documents, intelligent compromises should be made. It should not happen that there are seven of us there, but only six sign. Let's take into account that there is a meeting of the Comecon coming up. At the end of the discussion, Firiubin immediately transmitted home a report on the talks.

5/ On Saturday morning, March 15, the deputy foreign ministers met. Initially, the Poles put forward their own proposal, whose tone was sharper than the original, and then they retracted it.

¹ Ed. note: Nikolai Firiubin, Soviet Ambassador to Hungary

In an unfruitful debate, which lasted until dawn on Monday, the 17th, there was no progress. The Polish and the GDR comrades recommended lengthening the drafts and strengthening the wording; the Romanians wanted to cut the content and dilute the text.

6/ The delegations arrived on Sunday, March 16, one after the other. The initial reserve of the Czechoslovak delegation is worth mentioning; they relaxed somewhat by their departure. Dubček was unhappy about having to act as chairman.

7/ On Sunday morning, Comrades Kádár, Fock, Biszku and Komócsin met with the Soviet delegation. The Soviet comrades fully approved of Comrade Kádár's thoughts as conveyed by Firiubin. Comrade Brezhnev affirmed that we should concentrate on the military questions. In the interest of unity, we should even renounce point 12/b if the Romanians bring it up. He also agreed with Comrade Kádár that it was not worth bothering about words and it was also not necessarily desirable to fight for the original draft declaration and proclamation. Approval of a short communiqué and the proclamation was feasible. Comrade Brezhnev considered the main problem to be convincing Comrades Gomulka and Ulbricht.

8/ On Sunday night, March 16, the Soviet delegation was on Margitsziget between 6:30 p.m. and 1:30 a.m. They met with the Romanians and the Bulgarians twice, and once with the Czechoslovaks, the Poles and the leaders of the GDR. Then, between 2 a.m. and 3:15 a.m. at night, Comrade Brezhnev and his colleagues spoke with Comrades Kádár and Komócsin. Although we had all agreed on the military documents, Comrade Brezhnev said that still no matter what room he visited, he found a different position. The Polish and the German comrades wanted to sharpen the political edge of the declaration, and among other things, they urged the condemnation of China's border violations. It would not matter, they also asserted, if only six delegations signed the political documents. The Bulgarian's position was in agreement, and the Czechoslovaks' was loyal. The Romanians opposed stronger language, but they did not say anything about omitting point 12/b. Because of the complicated situation, Comrades Brezhnev and Kádár agreed that the meeting on the 17th would be rescheduled to start at 3 p.m. instead of 10 a.m., and Comrade Brezhnev and his delegation would speak to the leader of each delegation once again.

9/ On March 17, Comrade Brezhnev and the Soviet delegation met with the Polish, Czechoslovak and Bulgarian delegations. Because the meeting with the Polish comrades dragged on, Comrade Kádár recommended that the first secretaries and the chairmen of the councils of ministers of the member-states meet prior to the meeting at 3 p.m. All agreed to the proposal.

10/ The first secretaries and premiers met on March 17 at 2 p.m. At this point, Comrade Brezhnev proposed issuing a communiqué that emphasized the significance of the meeting and the importance of the military documents that had been signed. Although this meant omitting discussion of all timely international issues (NATO, the FRG, the Middle East, Vietnam, the Chinese border provocations) in the communiqué, the participants approved the compromise in the interest of unity. In the meantime, a meeting between Gomulka and Ceaușescu had resolved the only disputed matter regarding the proclamation; the Polish comrades accepted weaker

language in condemning the FRG, and in return, the Romanians renounced their malevolent proposal aimed at providing a negative appraisal of the August 21 action.² Thus it became possible to approve the proclamation, which – due to the amendments proposed by the Romanians in the editorial committee – had been significantly diluted from its original form.

11/ The meeting that opened on March 17 at 3 p.m. lasted two hours. After Comrade Kádár's opening words, [the session], under the chairmanship of Dubček, heard a 20-minute speech by Marshal Iakubovskii about the military documents' significance. Only Comrades Brezhnev and Kádár had brief comments on the topic, and then the first secretaries and the premiers signed the documents. The following documents were signed at the meeting:

- a/ Resolution regarding the Committee of Defense Ministers of the Warsaw Treaty member-states.
- b/ Resolution on the Unified Armed Forces and the Unified Command of the Warsaw Treaty member-states.
- c/ Resolution on the Military Council of the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty member-states.
- d/ Resolution on the unified air defense system of the Warsaw Treaty member-states.
- e/ Theoretical sketch of the organization of the leading organs of the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty member-states.

The texts of the communiqué and the proclamation passed unanimously without comment.

12/ The meeting of the Political Consultative Committee was a significant event. We approved the military documents. We created better conditions for the Comecon meeting. The proclamation emphasized that our policy directed at the relaxation of international tensions remains unchanged. The fact of the meeting itself attests to the consolidation of relations among the member-states. The preparation of the large international conference, the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee and the next meeting of the Comecon are sources of optimism for our movement. Our meetings suggest to the communists of the world that the relationship among the member-states is consolidating.

14/³ Comrade Ulbricht proposed that Comrade Kádár set the date of the Berlin meeting.

15/ Comrade Ceaușescu proposed an informal meeting with Comrade Kádár.

16/ Comrade Černík recommended to Comrade Fock that his visit to Czechoslovakia should take place in the first part of April.

² The other Warsaw Pact members' invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968.

³ Ed. note: The number 13 was skipped in the original.

17/ Comrade Kosygin told Comrade Biszku that they will be able to purchase meat and meat products in unlimited quantities and 15 percent of the price can be paid in freely convertible currency.

III.

1/ The Politburo takes note of and approves the information regarding the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee.

[“2/ The Council of Ministers...(illegible handwriting)]

2/ Charges the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to present a proposal regarding Comrade Kádár’s visit to Berlin at the forthcoming session of the Politburo.

3/ Comrade Jenő Fock should accept Prime Minister Černík’s invitation to visit between April 5 and April 17.

5/ If needed, the Secretariat should look into issuing a government or Hungarian News Agency communiqué regarding the Chinese border violations.

6/ [transl.: illegible handwriting in original]

Budapest, March 19, 1969.
Károly Erdélyi

[Translation by László Borhi]