

Strictly Confidential

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party Politburo
Regarding the Meeting of the Political Consultative
Committee on August 25, 1970
*[Excerpts]***

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Comrade János Kádár: ...

Report on the Moscow Talks of the Party and State Leaders of the Warsaw Pact

I think the comrades received the written report this morning, did you read it? Yes.

The comrades are aware of the circumstances of the meeting, although a quick vote had been taken regarding the delegation's composition. The meeting took place at Soviet initiative. We managed to come to an agreement in two-three days that the meeting should be in Moscow on August 20. Initially, the legal status of the meeting was rather murky, but we were able to agree that it would be an official meeting of the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee. This is what it was called in the closing communiqué.

I would like to say a few words about the meeting itself – as an amendment to the written material – and, I emphasize, partly to add to what is in the written report and conversely what is not in it.

The aim of the meeting was to provide information and a report to the member-states about the work that we discussed together last December: the German question, the question of European security, etc. The Soviet comrades prepared a briefing, the central topic of which was the agreement between the Soviet Union and the FRG. I would like to emphasize that in our view the Soviet comrades' briefing was very good, clever, precise, correct, all-embracing, and very detailed. It helped the meeting a great deal. Otherwise, the political position that was put forward was in complete harmony with the principles that had been formulated at previous meetings. Firmness with regard to principle, political flexibility and pliability could all be discerned in the political line reflected in the briefing, but it has also been reflected in the work that we have done. As you can see, the written material focuses on the Soviet briefing because it was comprehensive and contained everything.

The position of the others: I must say there was agreement, everybody welcomed it. This must be stressed because perhaps in one sense the Romanians have always remained on the sidelines regarding these issues, but they visibly welcomed the work that had been done and the agreement too, since it is more or less consistent with Romanian foreign policy. This comes

with the proviso that the Romanians have been trying to prove something for years -- namely, that they did the same thing, only sooner than the rest of us. Ceaușescu's speech was normal and comradely in style and was nothing more than diligent praise and [a positive] evaluation of Romanian politics: they have done this, achieved that; they even listed Maurer's visit [to Bonn] and asserted that they have always acted in the spirit of the Bucharest Declaration. Comrade Gomulka reacted to this in his own speech and said that this was, to put it mildly, not true; the opposite was true, but let's not talk about this now. He stressed that in their [the Polish communists'] view the main factor in developments was that after Romania's divergent step, the others joined forces and created a united front and acted in unity toward West Germany.

The other issue, which does not appear in the written material, is the issue of the GDR. I think we all know -- and even the general public knows -- that there is a coordinated policy in this regard, but a certain change has occurred in the past few years compared to the previous rigid stance. The two discussions between the GDR and the FRG can be traced back to this. And there were other manifestations that prove this -- e.g. Comrade Ulbricht's speech in Rostock, the government declaration, etc.

At the meeting a certain situation became apparent -- namely that the GDR's leadership is struggling with serious problems. The official speech of the GDR delegation was good. It was very brief. They greeted the work there and accepted the situation. Very briefly, they referred to the difficulties and tasks that they think are present in this situation. Circles in the FRG have not renounced their earlier objectives, so the struggle must go on in this new and complicated situation. They [the East Germans] emphasized: they are ready to do everything to successfully carry out our joint policy in keeping with the coordinated line.

The comrades have seen from various news and foreign policy reports that there is a debate within the GDR leadership. There is not much unity. This was verified at the meeting. It was perhaps most visible in appearances. We received various reports from the Soviet comrades that were completely in line with our preliminary information and confirmed it. Comrade Ulbricht fell ill in Moscow and had a sore throat and a high temperature. This high temperature went down by the morning of the 20th, but the doctors told him not to work. He wasn't even there at the meeting -- and I just say this between us. There were some -- unverifiable -- reports that they allegedly hadn't even shown their speech to Comrade Ulbricht. But this is not important! It seems that the debate within the GDR's leadership has been escalating for a while, and we saw signs of this already when we were there with Comrade Fock in January. But then it didn't focus on political questions, and now it does. It seems that there is a difference of opinion in the GDR's leadership about the political line. According to the new information, some of the comrades -- Honecker etc. -- support a more rigid stance. These political steps to the right, to the left, represent a great danger to the socialist camp as well. In their own debates they call this orientation "social-democratism" and of course, this isn't the precise meaning. What they mean is that the FRG, through broad contacts -- state relations, talks, exchanges of people -- is subverting the GDR, seeking to social-democratize the system. The debate in the leadership revolves around this. It seems that in this debate Comrade Ulbricht represents one position, and Comrade Honecker, another position. We have some information that Comrade Axen is the only

one who is supporting Comrade Ulbricht's position. Comrade Ulbricht, it seems to us, sees things in a somewhat more far-sighted manner and states things that are not really necessary because here we are with the Soviet Union, and he states more decisively the line contained in the Soviet-FRG treaty.

So much for the political part of it.

Based on all our experience, when it comes to Comrade Ulbricht's methods and leadership style – especially in that regard – things are generally not getting better as time goes by. He is 78 years old. We know ourselves that he has good insights, which he then keeps repeating constantly; it doesn't even leave him in peace on vacation. It is otherwise a good position, but he doesn't care much about what other people say. This is what the German comrades told Comrade Fock back then: Because they have a collective leadership there, there are things that they designate as questions of theory, which are discussed by the Politburo, and questions of practice, which are dealt with by the Secretariat or the operational leadership in the government. As far as we know, Comrades Honecker, Stoph, and Mittag struggle with it whenever it's a theoretical question. This theorizing goes on at length, three or four times, for years on end, and no work can be done while it lasts, they say. It seems, one must say, that these two things overlap. There is a new political situation, the GDR has to struggle within a new situation, and most likely, we are seeing a dispute stemming from work methods, it has been building up for some time, and now, Comrade Ulbricht is a little bit isolated. This has manifested itself badly on both sides. Comrade Ulbricht – well, he got really angry a few weeks ago. When the question of the GDR's negotiating strategy with the FRG came up, Comrade Ulbricht said that he would take a vacation, as he did, and that he would work out a proposal for these talks. Two others were also asked to work out a proposal, but to do so on their own, and when they were done, they would discuss what to do.

If this was the case, it was probably a great mistake. Comrade Ulbricht, it is said, traces back the roots of the conflicts and difficulties within the present leadership to when he handed over many things to Comrade Honecker, including work related to party organizations, work connected to the army, etc. And Honecker abused this. This has come up in things like: in the recent past, Comrade Ulbricht gave a political assessment somewhere and together with Comrade Honecker at a CC meeting, and [then] Comrade Honecker's assessment was adopted by the army, but not Ulbricht's. Comrade Ulbricht drew the conclusion that he would take everything back from Comrade Honecker. I am saying all this so the comrades can see the bad things that came together here. Obviously, I am saying this among us, and I wouldn't like to see it go beyond this circle. The Soviet comrades are trying to deal with this problem. Therefore, they met with the GDR comrades the day after the meeting. What came out of these talks was that somehow, we must work together in the same direction and help this leadership -- which is up to us, of course.

I mentioned it at the meeting there; we kept on saying: it is understandable that there is a new situation, and politically, the GDR needs to go down a slightly broader road. Several positions are possible, but we must clarify them in a theoretical, comradely debate. The other is related to Comrade Ulbricht's work methods: there is not much to be surprised about there. But we must find a solution here that is in tune with the spirit of the party. Our position is that during this

whole struggle and whatever comes next, the GDR, the SED has a decisive role [to play]. Thus, they also have a role to play in terms of the struggle, the competition that is going on; we say that this treaty carries mutual advantages, and both sides hope that they can use it to their own advantage. I don't have to say that the imperialists have political, strategic aims, and they will surely work full speed ahead to subvert the GDR and eventually to win it over. At this point we are talking not only about the GDR but the entire socialist camp.

They mentioned that a West German citizen told a Soviet diplomat: You can write whatever you want, and insist on whatever boundaries you want; in ten years' time we will use our economic strength to buy the GDR. Well, this is why the GDR, the SED plays a key role. It is essential to present a solid front, to remain unified, etc. This is the problem!

In such a situation I couldn't say anything except that the GDR needs Comrade Ulbricht's political and moral authority, which is undoubtedly present with regard to the opposition, internationally and even with regard to West German public opinion as well. On the other hand, certain work methods cannot be legalized; that's not the way to go about things either, and as I have said: Comrade Ulbricht should be dissuaded from taking authority away from other comrades. This isn't proper! Moreover, he is not even capable of it; how could a 78-year-old man conduct these affairs properly?

The Soviet comrades have said that after their talks, the GDR comrades departed with a view along the lines that they would try to solve their problems and won't hold a plenum about them straight away – this was their original plan – but they will clarify things on their own and consult with the Soviet comrades.

Once again: these matters should not go beyond this circle, neither in internal party information nor anywhere else; even the council of ministers should not deal with these things. This is a problem we know about. Let's not talk about it beyond this circle. The GDR comrades agree with the main line, but there are serious problems in terms of the future.

With regard to the meeting as a whole: there is an evaluation of sorts at the end of the report. I recommend that the Politburo approve it. The meeting itself was timely and useful, and it provided a proper assessment of the situation and gave appropriate recommendations for the tasks of the future. The task for our party, our government, our diplomats and propagandists is to implement [the outcome of] this joint meeting in our practical work.

There are a few political things I would like to mention. During the meeting, the Romanians brought up that the situation is such that the remaining member-states should establish diplomatic relations with the FRG. In our own speech we touched on this question by saying that at this moment, it is the right thing for the Poles to proceed with their talks, the Czechs should also raise their desire for negotiations, and then the GDR too; the steps to follow should be discussed and coordinated. We also said: let the struggle move forward for ratification, etc. Take this into account at the briefing. We can work along the political line here; work should proceed along the commercial and other lines; but we shouldn't raise the issue of diplomatic relations for the time being. Events will speed up in the coming months; the struggle will unfold.

I would like to mention a few more simple questions. As we signaled in the text, the comrades will have the Soviet speech; it is being translated and will be available at the CC office. With regard to this let me say: the essence of the speech is in the material. I would also mention that we haven't received this officially from the CPSU, but through the grapevine, through contacts. We have it unofficially.

Here we have the "Declaration of Intentions between the Governments of the FRG and the Soviet Union." We attached this text to the material sent to the Politburo as an appendix. Our delegation received this material, but I want to emphasize: this cannot leak out anywhere, in any way -- not even its content in the form that it [currently] exists. It cannot even be announced to the Council of Ministers. And let me ask that no mention of it be made anywhere; let's block this discussion.

Summing up, I ask the Politburo to resolve that the PB [Politburo] discussion, amended by the discussion of the Council of Ministers, should form the basis of what we normally call intra-party information but also even information for the general public. With appropriate circumspection and care, this should form the basis of the briefing. Let the responsible comrades do this. People who work in foreign policy, in the diplomatic line, should get a clear briefing on economic issues, where there are problems of cooperation and propaganda. I recommend that the responsible secretaries deal with this and take up this task along with Comrade Fock.

Regarding the Hungarian exhibition: there was a problem with the opening. The opening of the exhibition coincided with the opening of the [PCC] meeting. But because of the forthcoming attitude of the Soviet comrades, the problem was resolved. The exhibition was opened at 9 o'clock and the meeting started at 11 o'clock. The opening was successful. We visited the exhibition the next day. Comrades Kosygin and Brezhnev wanted to accompany us to visit the exhibition, but because of the talks with the Germans, they could not. The exhibition was very successful, a cultured exhibition. It has met its objective. But I am sorry about the way our own press deals with it. It should be done differently from the way they are doing it. Why do we have to say that all of Moscow has been awaiting the exhibition, that they are expecting one million visitors, and then have to say that the one hundred thousandth visitor arrived, etc. This has only ruined what was good in and of itself. It made a great impression upon the Soviet leaders; the public stood in line all day. Exactly because the exhibition speaks for itself, we don't need such needlessly stupid propaganda.

Comrade Apró:

Should the establishment of relations be mentioned at the consultative meeting of the [Warsaw Pact's] foreign ministers?

Comrade János Kádár:

A foreign ministers meeting is a separate question. The way this came up was that at the end of his speech, Comrade Brezhnev declared: there were proposals stating that a regular consultative

body is needed. He didn't call it that, but when we recommended the establishment of a foreign ministers council, we called it this. Others also referred back to it. Comrade Gomułka said that NATO has been better organized because they have two such meetings annually, etc. Comrade Ceaușescu also made mention of the issue and declared that they had said several times that it is superfluous, they don't agree with it, etc. But they also agree that the foreign ministers should meet more often. We and the Czechs joined together in stressing that such an organ would be a good idea, but if it cannot be done, then the foreign ministers should meet and consult more frequently.

I think it can be seen from the confidential material -- it is written in it -- that the parties view the treaty in such a way that the treaty with the Poles and the treaty with the GDR are complementary, and together they form a whole. I think the best thing to do is to assume that these issues are on track. The Poles will initial the treaty on the 9th-10th. The West Germans are looking to contact the Czechs, and the GDR will have to talk, too. We must wait, we must persevere, and when things are moving toward ratification, we can then talk about diplomatic contacts. But I think a few months will elapse without our having to bring up the question, and then we'll see.

I recommend that the Politburo approve [both] the aforesaid and the written report.

Recorded by Gyuláné Takács

[Translation by László Borhi]