

Strictly Confidential

**Minutes of Meeting of the HSWP Politburo  
February 1, 1972**

**Report on the Meeting of the Warsaw Treaty Political Consultative  
Committee in Prague, January 25-26, 1972**

Comrade János Kádár:

We have brought a message from the Czechoslovak comrades and the representatives of the fraternal parties that participated at the meeting, which I hereby present. I think that the report is quite clear and detailed; I have only a few short remarks.

According to unofficial information, the meeting was positive in every respect; it was better than the previous ones in terms not only of the agenda and the work that was done, but also even in terms of its atmosphere. This is encouraging with regard to our future work and joint actions. Of course, this doesn't mean that there weren't divergent views, but they were raised in a comradely way and were not intended to exacerbate the situation. There were also no clashes regarding form or content; the representatives of each party asked to take the floor, had the opportunity to do so and expressed their own position regarding the matter at hand. Our experience shows that this is not a bad format for negotiations. It was clearly felt that every part studied the position of the other.

There were contradictory positions on our relations with the FRG and what measures to take in this regard. There were three or four views on this score. The GDR represented one of the extreme positions, connecting it [relations with the FRG] to the final stage of its own program: that the others should settle their diplomatic relations with the FRG including membership in the UN [only when that final program is achieved]. The Romanian stance was the other extreme in that it did not fail to glorify a little their move back then.<sup>1</sup> In this regard they recommended that the others should also establish diplomatic relations with the FRG. We took an intermediate stance, not because of opportunism. If our work program succeeds -- ratification of the treaty, etc. -- we should consult and move forward. I think that this shows in the attached speech. In terms of steps to take in the future, it is very important to note that even the Romanian comrades agreed that a series of consultations in various forms are needed, partly in an organized form. The [foreign] ministers should convene, as well as others, while some of the consultations and harmonization of views should continue within the usual channels.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to Romania's decision in January 1967 to establish diplomatic relations with the FRG.

The question of the Common Market was a separate issue and this was the only one to which we shall return. This is what happened: the Executive Committee of the Comecon discussed it but was unable to formulate a position, so it turned to this body [i.e., the PCC], which in turn returned it to the Comecon Executive Committee. They have three months to deliberate on the question and to make a proposal to the Political Consultative Committee. As the comrades can see, the proposal includes the provision that everybody should instruct their own representatives to formulate a position and to start deliberating on it.

The report doesn't say, but there were other bilateral discussions during the unofficial contacts, which must be kept on the agenda: a Hungarian-Czechoslovak meeting and a Polish-Hungarian meeting. The meeting with the Czechoslovaks made it a little clearer what they want. It turned out that it [a bilateral summit] is not that urgent, but they would like it to see it happen in some form or the other in the not-too-distant future. The Poles are the same way. Thus, these have to be kept on the agenda, and we must agree on the dates as well as the participants in these meetings. What is timely right now, according to both the Czechoslovaks and the Poles, is that they expect us to send a note on this question. We shall contact them after the visit to Bucharest. That is how they should be scheduled. In the meantime we spoke about this with Comrade Fock, and we agreed that these meetings should take place without protocol, but still officially, on weekends. With the Czechoslovaks we could do it in Slovakia; it would make sense for the First Secretaries and the Prime Ministers to participate in them, but other partners could negotiate as well. I think that these should take place more or less officially. They had a series of meetings with their northern neighbors and they would like to do the same with their southern neighbors. They think that it would be good for them politically if the first of these occurred with Hungary. We should work out some concept of our own and send a message after Bucharest because they are waiting for us send a message.

There is also a third thing; this isn't official either. Comrade Brezhnev said that the two of us should meet; there are so many complicated talks, and we should meet as people, not as party secretaries. He asked me what I would be doing in February. I said I would check my schedule, and we can exchange messages on the fifth. We will look at the program. Both international and Hungarian-Soviet contacts would benefit from an unofficial, fraternal meeting. We should focus on this as well.

Please approve the report. It is also for the council of ministers; although they already had an oral report, but they should get it nonetheless. Comrade Czinege should definitely get one. Even though the ministers of defense were not present at the meeting, we should stick to the custom that the Political Consultative Committee requires a four-member delegation. The materials cited in the report will be available beginning tomorrow.

Comrade Antal Apró:

Let's accept the report. I would like to add something regarding the character [of the meeting]. When the Warsaw Treaty was established, there were not [sic] primarily two ideas about the procedure for deliberations: we should create a military and a political system within this body. Comrade Kádár says that we should stick to the old system, and I agree. It is definitely correct that there are also military issues on the agenda. But the talks are also good the way they are now in terms of the international political aspect. If we otherwise look at the Western response [to the meeting], they found the position on political issues and the open declaration interesting. I think it is a good idea for the organs of the Warsaw Treaty to appear publicly sometimes as a military, sometimes as a political forum.

Comrade Rezső Nyers:

I also recommend that the report be accepted; I agree with the position taken by our delegation. It is very useful to have discussions such as these because it permits a free flow of ideas from which we can draw useful conclusions.

There are two things I'd like to mention: one is the question of the Common Market. Comrade Brezhnev's speech is noteworthy because it underlines both the political and the economic aspect. It follows that the Comecon Executive Committee [EC] should deal with it in depth and it's a good thing that there will be such an instruction. The economic people are debating it and are afraid that the political people will not agree. This has a lot of economic content. I think it would be good if the Comecon EC could get the political organ to discuss this issue. Comrade Brezhnev's remark that the West European countries are no longer the vassals of the United States is noteworthy. It follows that the historical moment has arrived when we can also increase our influence on the West European countries through economic relations and thus reduce American influence, even if we cannot eliminate it completely. The European neutrals will settle their relations with the EEC after the expansion, and it would be good if this could precede our move. After a time, there will be contacts from the Third World as well. If we delay in settling our relations, then the US can possibly gain influence after all, and the EEC will become a NATO organ instead. It is correct that we continue to urge not only a settlement of relations but also a working out of the necessary methods. The Romanians are very impatient about this question. At the last meeting of the Comecon EC, when the talks almost reached a dead end, we did manage to come up with a resolution that they almost announced: that they have a free hand to establish contacts with the Common Market. I don't know whether this will be realized, but it is desirable that the Romanians proceed with this.

Comrade Brezhnev said in his speech, maybe on page 7, that the FRG should be reminded that the settlement of its relations with Czechoslovakia is one of the preconditions for all the socialist states' establishing diplomatic relations with it. We cannot ask more of the West German government than to ratify the Soviet-West German and the Polish-West German treaties and to settle its relations with Czechoslovakia. This is logical, and a step forward from our previous position. The settlement of the West German-Czechoslovak issue is uncertain.

Comrade Husák said in his speech that they would renew their contacts, negotiate and find some kind of solution. In the next few months, we should try to assemble information about this and exchange views regarding how we can formulate a position that corresponds to Czechoslovakia's interests. We should also make possible what our delegation has recommended: the establishment of diplomatic relations shortly after ratification. If this does not happen, the impact of the treaties will be less.

I also fully support our delegation's speech.

Comrade Dezső Nemes:

I think that we all had a good feeling when we read the report. I would like to mention two questions. One is about relations with the FRG. I agree with what has been written. I think that it would be expedient to hold bilateral talks about this sometime. Not establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG is one way of having an impact. It seems that they are not taking into account the pressure on the FRG.

The second thing has to do with the comrades from the GDR. These comrades are worried about the atmosphere that will be created if these two countries [the FRG and the GDR] are left until last; Western propaganda will claim that they [the GDR] are isolated. This is a wholly treacherous thing; there is such a concern. If we join forces, it will not be such a big deal to liquidate this concern. We should talk about this; this is also a factor. The delegation's speech states that this is also a factor and refers primarily to relations between the FRG and Poland. Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria should act together regarding the proposals raised here; we could hold bilateral talks about this, focusing on the Polish-West German relationship – i.e., what is better in terms of the domestic political impact in the FRG.

As far as the question of the Common Market is concerned, it would be worth discussing in the bilateral talks. There is one factor involved: the significance of this in terms of economic policy is not the same for every Comecon country. For a country like Hungary, where the proportion of international trade is large, it's a difficult question. It is hard to explain this at the joint meetings, but it would be a good idea to raise it at bilateral meetings. The FRG is an interested party, and I think we can find an appropriate form.

This is what I wanted to add in joining the approval of the report and the recommendation.

Comrade János Péter:

Esteemed Politburo! I would like to add a few words as information to the remark on the Comecon. At the Prague meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, Comrade Ceaușescu's oral remarks on Comecon diverged from the written version. We don't have the written version, but he clearly spoke freely when he came to this part – obviously, because Comrade Brezhnev's speech contained those sentences, those fairly negative sentences. Comrade Ceaușescu reacted to these spontaneously; he asked that we coordinate our position on the EEC in the Comecon framework. He promises that Romania would follow whatever the Comecon agrees upon regarding the EEC. As far as the talks with the FRG are concerned, the report appropriately reflects the many nuances that exist at the moment. I reported to Comrade Kádár back in Prague that the GDR comrades had made a comment that the Hungarians interpret the joint documents differently than the comrades from the GDR. It is possible that Honecker will not raise the issue this way, but the members of the delegation will certainly talk about this in the foreign ministry.

In practical terms the Polish proposal seems to be the most rational. The representatives of the ministries should get together sometime in the fall and agree regarding future measures to recommend to their superior organs. Until ratification takes place, we cannot formulate a concerted stance on these questions. In reality there are insignificant, slight differences between each position. Concerning the FRG, Comrade Brezhnev stated: there is no point in asking anything else of the FRG than ratification of the two treaties. The Czechoslovak initiative (?)<sup>2</sup> itself is a more flexible position.

Comrade János Kádár:

I don't think we can decide on some of the crucial questions. We have a position, and work is proceeding. But perhaps since we mentioned them, we might devote a few minutes to them for the sake of our future work. Regarding what Comrade Apró said about the character of the session: I would like to state, it's a known thing, that the status of the Warsaw Treaty is such that there were [various] steps taken in terms of the military organization, two or three measures taken to implement a certain resolution from 1967; it's an active organ and it operates institutionally. I would like to note – and this is well-known – that certain measures have

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<sup>2</sup> Question mark in the original.

been taken in the military branch of the Warsaw Treaty; it's an operational organ, it works institutionally. There is a system for this in the military branch of the Treaty. The political structure is weaker. There is this traditional form with the four representatives. There is no institutional organ. This is the weakness of the organization. It was not the first time – and perhaps correctly – that the ministers of defense did not participate in the meeting. There may have been some kind of political reason: that it [the meeting] should not assume a military character, because that would not have been in keeping with the topic. There is only one disturbing aspect to this – the precedent. We shouldn't have to debate next time whether the ministers of defense should be there or not. For it's also conceivable that we could come out with a purely political document even in the presence of the ministers of defense. We have to say that there is a readiness even on the part of the Romanians, who did not vote for an institutional consultation, to join such consultation.

It is also true that we must make use of the bilateral meetings – tomorrow's as well – as much as possible. Tomorrow, we are meeting the most difficult partner.

With regard to the FRG, there are two tough questions on the agenda: the FRG and the Common Market. As far as the FRG is concerned, the opening position is the GDR's, and because of the speech, I put the Polish position on the same plane. The Polish position was not fully laid out. Comrade Péter praised the flexibility of the Polish position and mentioned that they have proposed consultations by the foreign ministers sometime in the fall. This is not what we propose. The difference is the existence of a resolve that everything should be done for the ratification of the two treaties. The procedure is under way in the FRG. In our view this will be over by July, with either a positive or a negative outcome; either they are ratified, or ratification fails, along with the government. Therefore, based on our timing, there should be a consultation in four or five months, and whatever happens, whether positive or negative, we cannot wait another three months for the foreign ministers to meet. So whether they ratify or not, a high-level meeting must be convened in short order. The foreign ministers will not decide this question. I think that a foreign ministers' meeting would be useful soon. Presently, there is room to deliberate on hypothetical events. It would be useful now to set up groups of experts; the deputy foreign ministers should meet, then the foreign ministers should have a meeting in the first half of the year, by July. Perhaps this is the way we should look at it. This issue will expire in July; the FRG has repeatedly said that based on their procedure, the ratification debate will end by then. If it drags on, there will be changes.

Regarding the establishment of relations with the FRG: The GDR's position is tacitly supported by Poland. Then there is the Czechoslovak and the Soviet position: they would openly link it to the resolution of the issue related to the Munich Agreement. Then, there are the Romanians and us; the Bulgarians have maintained a deep silence. These are the positions that must be brought down to a common denominator.



Something else about the Hungarian position. As things developed, the delegation had no other option; we had to interpret the Party's position. We picked out a concrete position from it. We were at a stage in which the Poles repeated that if they ratify, we will establish diplomatic relations. And we, not coincidentally, attached two more wagons to it. So we shouldn't separate it. The Poles have their major, controversial issue, but it will be resolved by ratification; the Bulgarians don't, and they have nothing to wait for. The idea was that Munich will not be so easy. I don't think it will be resolved with ratification; understandably, it is not so easy for the West Germans, and the Czechs can be understood as well. It is a historical precedent. The West can be understood as well, because this is a treaty in which four countries – the British, the French, Germany and Italy – decided the fate of a small country, without involving it. This is the political aspect of the thing. The other is the legal basis; during the war, their governments acted as if the agreement had never existed. It is not simple from the Hungarian side either. Nullifying the Munich Agreement has a bearing on Hungary. But nobody mentions this, people forget. We support nullification of the Munich Agreement. We must proceed with consultations – the bilateral ones, the official and unofficial ones, etc. We'll see how this question comes up with Comrade Honecker. There is no particular point in raising it, because we cannot agree here. Our positions are distant from one another. We must ponder about what will help their struggle more. This is the way we must look at it.

The situation concerning the Common Market isn't simple either. Comrade Péter cited Ceaușescu. But this position also said that if we cannot reach common ground, Romania will settle its [own] relations with the EEC. This is also a part of things. Not just that they are prepared to follow our common position. This [position] also included [the assertion]: if we don't reach common ground within a certain time, they will settle their relations on their own. What makes this not so simple? It [the EEC] is a monopoly-capitalist, imperialist undertaking. This is the way it was born. It has been directed primarily against the socialist world. It is simultaneously a political and an economic question. What we are also talking about – and I really don't want to go into this – is that it is not primarily an economic affair for the Common Market, either. What it's about is that the Comecon as an organization should recognize and enter into diplomatic contact with the EEC and vice-versa.

This is in fact what is going on. Matters are headed in the direction that everyone will settle their economic ties with the EEC countries. Bilateral or not, this will not be so terrible; the EEC has an interest in trading with the East European socialist market, and they will also seek a way. As far as I know, the West Germans will extract this inner-German thing somehow. Official recognition of the Common Market as a political unit is made even harder by the fact that the French Party is explicitly asking us not to do so because it will complicate their political struggle. They agree to our acknowledgement of its existence as an economic factor and our establishment of bilateral contacts, but the

Comecon as such should not recognize the Common Market; its political weight would only grow, and this would complicate their political struggle at least for now. Therefore, this is not an easy question.

Comrade Rezső Nyers:

Their main problem is that we should not strengthen the supranational status of the Common Market.

Comrade János Kádár:

I don't want to say why and how, but the French party says that if the Comecon recognized the Common Market at this point in time it would complicate their political struggle. If I say that the Common Market is a political, an economic organization, it is still a real, existing organization...

Comrade Rezső Nyers:

We are in a position to represent the French position...

Comrade János Kádár:

It's not as simple as it seems. Within our alliance system, the Warsaw Treaty and the Comecon, these are the two internal questions; these are the central issues that we must work on: our relationship with the FRG, which is strategic, and our relationship with the EEC, which is both tactical and strategic.

There is yet another thing, and that is the Hungarian delegation's visit to Bucharest for the signing of the treaty of friendship. This was also mentioned unofficially. They agree with this measure. Comrade Brezhnev also spoke about this. This is also of significance. The GDR would clearly like this to happen because afterwards, they would like to conclude a treaty of friendship [with Romania]. The Czechs have a similar problem.

Comrade Béla Biszku:

We need a two-sentence resolution: the Politburo accepts the report and approves the work done by the delegation. The council of ministers should also receive the material.



Comrade János Kádár:

Perhaps one more thing: the Hungarian-Czechoslovak and Hungarian-Polish meetings should be kept on the agenda, and after the visit to Bucharest, we should propose dates.

*[Translation by László Borhi]*