
Memorandum on the Hungarian Position Concerning the Transformation of the Warsaw Pact Working Mechanisms

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Department of Socialist Cooperation

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Memorandum

Subject: Meeting of experts studying the development of the Warsaw Treaty's cooperation mechanism (Moscow, December 8-10, 1988)

In consequence of the resolutions made by the Political Consultative Committee at Warsaw in July 1988 and the Committee of Foreign Ministers at Budapest in October 1988, a series of meetings has begun in Moscow at the level of expert advisors, whose task is to harmonize the proposals that the various member states had submitted for improving the mechanism of cooperation within the Warsaw Treaty alliance; the resulting documents are to be submitted to the joint session of the Committee of Foreign Ministers and the Committee of Defense Ministers, which will present a summary of the proposals to the next meeting of the Political Consultative Committee.

In view of the known and the anticipated initiatives, and also in consideration of our national aspirations regarding the improvement of the cooperation within the Warsaw Treaty, the head of the team of experts (Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Defense) representing Hungary will have the following mandate:

1.) With the exception of the Romanian Socialist Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic, essentially all the member states support the idea of a permanent seat for the organization (a Warsaw Treaty secretariat). These proposals have been announced at the highest levels and it is expected that at the next session of the Political Consultative Committee in Bucharest there will be a debate. I suggest that the Hungarian delegation should first of all voice its reservations (also making no secret of our financial problems). At the same time, we must avoid the situation, whereby the Hungarian side should find itself opposing the idea of a permanent organization all by itself. In case the establishment of a permanent organization is decided, we must firmly recommend that it also handle the issues of improving cooperation in the areas of human rights and humanitarian problems. In the debate our position must be made clear, whereby the new permanent organization should be patterned on the currently functioning Information Group and Special Committee of Disarmament, preserving and further developing their valuable qualities.

2.) Regarding the suggestion that the competence of the Warsaw Treaty General Secretary should be broadened, we must, in general terms, advance reasons for improving the work of coordination and outward communication, at the same underlining the need to assign greater responsibility to the General Secretary in this regard. At the end of the debate, we must vote in favor of those proposals under the terms of which the General Secretary is elected by the Political Consultative Committee from the ranks of those diplomats, who have ambassadorial status.

3.) In order to improve the work in both the Political Consultative Committee and the Committee of Foreign Ministers, we must encourage the debating spirit and the working atmosphere of these meetings, demanding the shortening of the presentation of written material in favor of the informal exchange of ideas. With more time available, these debates should give more orientation, allowing the Warsaw Treaty to elucidate its positions in a more careful way on the truly pressing matters and serving as guidelines for the meeting of the experts. We should agree with the idea of holding meetings for members of the delegations attending the Political Consultative Committee (foreign ministers, ministers of defense, prime ministers). We should demand to make these organizations more open and push for holding joint press conferences. Analyzing the lessons of the Committee of Foreign Ministers' Budapest meeting, we must emphasize the importance of small, practical steps.

4.) We must give a critical assessment of the activities of the Information Group and the Special Committee on Disarmament, demanding that these organizations be given greater role both in preparing the decisions of the Committee of Foreign Ministers and the Committee of Defense Ministers and in framing the statements of the Political Consultative Committee. We should reiterate the need to set up a Warsaw Treaty special committee dedicated to the issues of human rights and humanitarian relations.

5.) We should point out that, without compromising the principle of consensus politics, some progress is required in the methods of arbitrating disputes: short of a consensus, the principle of interestedness should prevail in passing resolutions, according to which those with a direct interest in a resolution should assume a binding obligation on their own behalf. We must positively support the idea that in the future all differences of opinion, which may emerge in connection with the wording or the content of public documents, should be recorded in a brief comment.

6.) We recommend that the current system of introducing proposals, which is based merely on tradition at the moment, should be complemented with, and improved by, a more advanced procedure. To be developed by the team of experts, this new system should also incorporate the new methods of passing resolutions and the new element of recording minority views.

7.) On the point of developing the efficiency of cooperation between the military organizations, we must stress the following (in harmony with the views of the Ministry of Defense):

Since the number of questions of a military policy aspect is expected to increase on the agenda of the Political Consultative Committee, the internal procedures of the Committee of Defense Ministers should be reviewed and perfected, without substantially changing the structure of the Committee itself. The legal status and the competence of the Committee of Defense Ministers should be clarified and further concretized, making it unambiguous in what way it can pass resolutions and make recommendations. The equal status,

the mutual responsibility and the national as well as the joint interests of the member states must be better observed in the work of the Committee of Defense Ministers.

Regarding the improvement of the mechanism of decision-making in the military organizations, the Hungarian side wishes to preserve their capability to make decisions even in cases when the positions conflict: recommendations should be made even when there is no consensus. It would not be contrary to the Hungarian position, if the states with an interest in the matter could pass resolutions that applied only to themselves. We would like to see more questions related to the member states' military-industrial activities on the agenda of the Committee of Defense Ministers.

As regards the military council of the Unified Armed Forces, similarly to the case of the Committee of Defense Ministers, the introduction of a system of making recommendations when no consensus can be reached would be useful. Regarding the competence of the Commander and the Chief of Staff of the Unified Armed Forces, the best approach would be to select a suitable person from the leaders of the Soviet armed services and appoint him for a period of 4 to 6 years. (Allowing only one extension of his term at the most.) It would be also advisable, if the rest of the top positions in the Unified Armed Forces were filled by the candidates of the other member states.

At the meeting we should bring up the possibility of creating the position of the Lieutenant Commander in Chief, which would be filled by representatives of the member states on a rotational basis. For the period of their term in this position they would be relieved from duty at their own national armed forces. The work of the Unified Armed Forces' staff should be made more effective in such a way that also allows a certain reduction of personnel. In order to avoid the development of parallel capacities, the technical services should make improvements in the area of cooperation.

The Hungarian side could support the idea of establishing a military information council, but the emphasis must be on the tasks delegated to the council and not on its structure.

In connection with improving the work of the military organizations of the Warsaw Treaty, we wish to continue the joint work on the peace resolution; to further clarify the duties of people filling various positions; to study the possibility of engaging the commander in chief of the various member states in the work of the Unified Armed Forces' military organizations, so as to lay proper emphasis on the point that in peacetime the national command centers are responsible for the training of the troops assigned to the Unified Armed Forces. Finally, the further perfection of both the peace resolution and the war resolution is required, which we intend to promote and speed up in the framework of the series of negotiations, which are now planned in the subject of improving the cooperation of the various military organizations of the Warsaw Treaty.

Finally, we should reiterate that the proposals we have submitted to strengthen the work character of the political and military organizations of the Warsaw Treaty and to simplify the formalities and the protocol are still on the table.

8.) The Romanian side will probably try to focus attention on the proposals the Romanian Communist Party has forwarded to the sister parties in the subject of transforming the Warsaw Treaty. These modifications affecting the roles of the political organizations - the admission of Yugoslavia and Albania to the Warsaw

Treaty - are essentially aimed at, and may lead to, the revision of the original treaty. I suggest that we ask the Romanian comrades to give us their reasons for wishing to expand the Warsaw Treaty; we should find out whether they have conducted consultations with the Yugoslav side about this, etc. The Hungarian delegations should not give a categorical answer to the Romanian proposals.

9.) The Soviet side is expected to motion the introduction of a new practice whereby representatives of the various foreign ministries and defense ministries mutually take part in the plenary sessions of the committees of the foreign ministers and the defense ministers. We should support this proposal - on the basis of reciprocity.

The Hungarian delegation should also have a mandate to express the view that the cooperation within the framework of the Warsaw Treaty is adversely affected by the apparent lack of the necessary harmony between the political line sincerely embracing the new foreign policy thinking and the military line reluctantly adopting the defense doctrine.

Budapest, 6 December 1988.

[Translation by Ervin Dunay]