
**Foreign Ministry Memorandum to the HSWP Political Committee on
Hungarian-Soviet Consultation re: European Security Conference**

18 October 1969

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM

for the Politburo

On October 17 Soviet deputy foreign affairs minister suggested that we should conduct an informal exchange of opinion the next day in Moscow on the preparation of the European security conference. With the approval of comrades Kádár, Fock and Pullai the meeting took place on October 18. (During these days the deputy ministers of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign affairs were conducting similar bilateral talks with the representatives of the foreign affairs ministries of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania.)

In the course of the talks we touched upon the following issues:

1. The standpoint of the Western powers concerning the conference.

According to comrade Semyonov the situation is complex, we cannot say that we have got the conference in our pocket. Though the general public received the idea very well the world over, significant forces are working against it more and more actively.

The leaders of the United States, England, West Germany and Italy clearly see that the conference would serve the recognition of the realities resulting from the second world war, including the de facto recognition of the GDR, the easing of European tension and the loosening of the ties between NATO countries. Therefore they endorse it in words, but they are working against it in the background.

The French attitude is rather reserved. The French leaders can see that their major political endeavor, the simultaneous weakening of the European position of the two opposing camps could hardly come about at the conference, so their attitude is characterized by reservation and disinterest.

Some activity can be observed in the leading circles of certain smaller European nations (Belgium, Finland).

Based on the above analysis the Soviet leaders concluded that we could reasonably reckon with the possibility of this conference only if as a first step we proposed a rather general agenda acceptable to everybody. This is served by the two Soviet procedural motions of which the first would declare the renunciation of violence, the other one the need to improve economic cooperation in a general form.

In the opinion of the Soviet leaders there is a lot of similarity between the problem of general and complete disarmament and the issue of European security from a tactical point of view. As long as the problem had been discussed as a whole, there had been no progress for many years.

There has been some partial progress (the Moscow nuclear test ban, the use of space and the poles for peaceful goals, the nuclear barrier treaty) since 1963 because it was possible to put some parts of the whole issue on the agenda. Similarly, we can expect progress in the issue of European security only if we do not bring up all the components of the whole problem at the beginning, but as a first step we restrict the agenda to one or two questions in which we may achieve some success.

Even in such a case there is no guarantee that the conference will be convened by the first half of 1970. Still, it is desirable to urge this date, for this way we can demonstrate our positive intentions and keep our enemies at bay.

2. The standpoint of the member states of the Warsaw Treaty concerning the preparation and the agenda of the conference.

With the exception of the Romanians there is consensus that the foreign affairs ministers should meet in Prague on October 30 – 31. The Romanian side agrees with the date, but they still propose Bucharest as the seat of the meeting. The Soviet comrades told the Romanians that in addition to political reason there was one procedural motive which spoke for Prague: the last time the representatives of the Warsaw Treaty met in Prague was in January 1956, while they met in Bucharest the last time in the summer of 1966. I indicated that the Hungarian side supported Prague.

There is also consensus that the security conference should have the two items proposed by the Soviet side on the agenda. However, some countries proposed amendments to the agenda, which would automatically make the conference impossible to hold.

Thus the Polish side proposes amendments to the first item on the agenda under the label of a collective European security treaty (territorial status quo, the recognition of the borders and the GDR de jure) which would practically turn the security conference into a peace conference, making it impossible to hold it, for the Western countries would not be willing to discuss such issues.

The supplementary proposals of the Romanian side demand the termination of the existing blocs, the withdrawal of foreign troops from the European countries, the abolition of foreign military bases, and the renunciation of demonstrating force. These proposals are not acceptable for the NATO countries. If pressed hard, they would torpedo the conference.

The amendments proposed by the GDR are of structural nature, but in reality they are aimed at the recognition of the GDR by the conference.

The Bulgarian and the Czechoslovak sides agree with the Soviet proposals.

So there is a danger now that the agenda of the conference at the meeting of the foreign affairs ministers of the Warsaw Treaty on October 20 – 30 will be modified in such a way that is similar to choking the infant in the cradle, thereby losing the positive results of our preparatory efforts.

Therefore comrade Semyonov and his colleagues requested the Hungarian side to assist them in making the meeting of the foreign affairs ministers more constructive. Though in their opinion the Hungarian supplementary proposals that were present on the agenda of the Politburo in general correspond to the common interests of the socialist countries, but from tactical considerations they suggest that we should not submit them now but at a later phase of the security conference. They asked us to assist them this time to disarm the rather excessive Romanian and Polish proposals.

We also came to an agreement that in order to better prepare the meeting of the foreign affairs ministers and to further restrict the emerging questions it might be desirable for the deputy ministers to meet one or two days before October 30.

3. The Soviet – Chinese relations, the Vietnamese and the Middle Eastern issues, the elections in the FRG.

As compared to what comrade Brezhnev had said in Berlin comrade Semyonov did not mention any new element concerning the Chinese, the Vietnamese and the Middle Eastern issues.

The preliminary evaluation of the elections in the FRG by them holds that with the succession of Brandt and his company the most liberal wing of the West German imperialism had got into power. Brandt and his associates wish to change the European status quo without the use of arms. There are minute differences between Brandt and Kissinger, and we have to make use of these nuances.

4. Concerning the preparation of the European security conference I propose:

In order to establish a standpoint shared by the members of the Warsaw Treaty we should support the Soviet proposals for the agenda of the security conference at the meeting of the foreign affairs ministers in Prague. We should counter the excessive Polish, Romanian and East German standpoints. Of tactical considerations we should not submit our proposals that were on the agenda of the meeting of the Politburo this time but rather in a later phase of the preparation of the conference. In the meantime we should continue to work out the Hungarian proposals in detail among ourselves, involving the necessary people.

Budapest, October 18, 1969.

Károly Erdélyi

[Translation by Andreas Bocz]