

Document No. 42: Transcript of Gathering of Warsaw Pact  
Leaders in Karlovy Vary, April 25, 1967

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*This conference of Warsaw Pact leaders at Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, received significant attention in the West at the time, but it was only recently that the transcript of most of the sessions became available. Officially, it was not a Warsaw Pact meeting, but it dealt extensively with socialist bloc political strategy vis-à-vis NATO. Significantly, the Romanians refused to attend, allegedly because Ceaușescu had not been properly consulted, but in reality because he did not want to commit to what the Soviet Union would dictate on behalf of the other member-states. Ceaușescu also wanted to avoid being associated with an anti-NATO policy since he was already trying to improve relations with certain members of the alliance himself. The thrust of the session was to call publicly for the dissolution of NATO and ejection of the United States from Europe, a move which Western observers regarded as the start of a broad campaign against the Atlantic alliance. Some analysts, such as Marshall Shulman<sup>8</sup>, saw the declaration as amounting to the creation of a northern tier within the Warsaw Pact comprising Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, strategically the most important members of the bloc.*

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TOP SECRET

Notes of Conversations of First Secretaries  
of CC Communist and Workers' Parties in Socialist Countries  
at the Meeting in Karlovy Vary

[...]

*Brezhnev:* First of all, I would like to inform the comrades about the purpose of our meeting. [...] Cde. Gomułka put forth an idea, to which we adhere. Namely, whether we, as communist parties of socialist countries, should approach the Chinese leadership with a letter. The main thought was to invite the Chinese for joint agreed-upon actions in the fight against American imperialism in the defense of Vietnam. And not only in general words, but to try to present certain matters concretely while complementing the aspect of political unity:

1. Taking into consideration the danger of the Americans breaking Haiphong, we asked the Chinese to designate their ports for the transfer of supplies to Vietnam.
2. The capacity of the rail [system] should also be increased, since there is much congestion over there at the moment.

[...]

<sup>8</sup> Marshall Shulman, a political scientist at Columbia University, was a specialist on the Soviet Union who later became special adviser to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance for Soviet affairs from 1977 to 1980.

3. We would ask the Chinese to perhaps make their airports, which are located near the border, available [to us]. The planes will be ours; we can also send our own staff.
4. We, the Soviet Union, could also provide China with locomotives for Vietnam; the idea itself is important and, if we were to reach a basic agreement, we could delegate 1–2 parties to draft such a letter, as well as to dispatch it, or hand it personally to all those interested, have it signed and find ways to deliver it directly to the leadership of the CCP. [...]

If this letter were accepted, this would be our joint success. [...]

On the other hand, if this letter were badly received, if they were to give a bad answer, then this would expose them in the eyes of the Vietnamese. And subsequently we could send their letter, along with our response, to the fraternal parties and to whomever we deem necessary. This would contribute to further unveiling the essence of Mao Zedong's policy, towards [the goal of] further isolating China. [...]

*Gomułka:* [...] As Comrade Brezhnev was saying, if the Chinese were to accept our proposal, this would restrain them from attacking the USSR. It would be a great international event. [President Lyndon B.] Johnson would find himself under pressure of public opinion.

If the Chinese were to reject our proposals, then we would have, in the presence of the entire international movement [and] all the parties, a document pointing to the source and causes of why we cannot stop the bombings of the DRV.

[...]

*Brezhnev:* [...] We have to do this with the utmost caution, while maintaining top secrecy in order not to give them any reasons to feel offended, since by inviting them to cooperate we are [...] I spoke to [CPSU Politburo member Mikhail] Suslov yesterday, and today with Kosygin. They support this idea. I assume that Mongolia will sign the letter. We should also turn to the Romanians, [since] it is a socialist country. We will tell them about our initiative and I don't know exactly how they could refuse.

I, personally, spoke twice to [North Korean leader] Kim Il Sung (he sent two battalions of pilots to Vietnam). We have to approach him. Indeed, it will be difficult for him to sign, but maybe he will.

*Gomułka:* If Kim Il Sung were not to sign, I doubt whether it would be worth approaching the Mongolians. Mongolia will not be able to help very much.

The justification is that it is the Warsaw Pact countries which are coming out with a request, and if Kim Il Sung signed then perhaps we could even get Mongolia.

[...]

*Ulbricht:* The proposal of Comrades Brezhnev and Gomułka is very good and it spurs us on. I consider it correct for the CPSU to work on the draft of the letter. We should try very much to have both Korea and Mongolia sign the letter. It is very important from the political point of view that two Asian countries take part in this and that we are not coming out with this alone as European nations. If Korea were to take part in this, it would have great political weight.

[...]

As far as the Romanians, in view of their reaction to our meeting, I don't think it is necessary to open up the curtains. And our argument would not affect them. It would be better to put the matter in this way: It is we, the first secretaries, who met and came to an agreement; where and how is not their business. Let them think what they want, but formally it is not necessary to inform them about this because they will immediately say that they were not consulted, etc.

We have to give the impression that we are discussing this matter with them in a preliminary way, and that we are only now beginning to come to an understanding between one another. [...]

*Gomulka:* I think that we should begin differently—from Korea, since this is, to some degree, what the content of our letter depends upon. If Kim Il Sung's response is positive, then we would have to draft a letter, consult with all the countries, and with Romania in the end. Why? Not only because they will spread the news immediately, but also because they will have many corrections, proposals, etc. And if we say that we already have the consent of Korea, Mongolia, and [other] socialist countries, it will be easier to agree on the content of the letter.

Let the CPSU take care of this. It will send out people to us in order to personally deliver the draft of the letter and let each country take a position on it. Afterwards, we will work out the final version of the letter. And as for the Romanians, we should not send them the first draft, but only the draft that has been agreed upon.

*Ulbricht:* No. It is our private business what we agree upon. If the Romanians find out that we have already agreed on everything, then they will refuse due to official reasons.

[...]

*Gomulka:* Yes, but first we will coordinate among ourselves; we will not tell them; this is our private matter.

*Kádár:* [...] I think, however, that a point of departure should be the fact that we gathered in Karlovy Vary, which to the Romanians is after all not a secret, and that this was an appropriate moment to talk about this. While approaching this with caution, we don't have to say that we have already agreed on anything, but simply that we met and here is how this idea came up [...] We should treat the Warsaw Pact as a point of departure.

[...] We should approach the Romanians and then Korea and Mongolia. Depending on the answer from the Romanians, we will be able to expand this to the Asian countries. And if it does not work out, we will stay within the framework of the Warsaw Pact. No matter what "tricks" we try, the answer of the Romanians will be either "yes" or "no".

[...]

*Gomulka:* Let them find out 2 days prior to such a letter coming out, but let's not give them 3 weeks.

*Kádár:* It is worth pondering, but the Romanians will find out earlier than the Chinese. Such a danger exists. And even if they find out last they will drag it out. And it will leak out. The Yugoslavs and the Chinese will find out. [...]

*Brezhnev:* [...] If the Koreans don't go for the letter, then our letter will assume

the character of a Warsaw [Pact] document. If they agree, it means that the fraternal parties of socialist countries, which want to jointly defend Vietnam, are approaching [them with such an initiative]. Our next moves will depend on this.

I would propose such a plan: [...] We will prepare two versions: counting on Korea and as the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Afterwards, our responsible secretary will go to you; we will designate two representatives and we will give them 1–2 days in order to agree on the two versions of the letter. If we get such a request, I can send [KGB head Yuri] Andropov to Korea. I will come to an understanding with Kim Il Sung to receive him as if on a personal matter. He will fly in secret. First, without showing the letter, he will present the idea to him orally, and if Kim Il Sung supports it, then he will show him the letter. If he does not support it, he will not show the letter. He will say, “Oh well, we wanted to strengthen our solidarity, etc., etc.” [...] If Andropov says it didn’t work out, that version will be dropped. The second one will remain in effect, the Warsaw one.

[...]

*Brezhnev:* This would be the first variant. But where the author of the letter is the CPSU, Ceaușescu will be digging out points in order to say that he is against it. He will state that in order to take a stand on such a letter, we will have to meet [and] discuss the matter, etc. And then he will start his song—to stop the work of the Committee of the 18th, to strengthen the political campaign against the Americans, to pressure Johnson, etc. How to avoid this?

[...]

And now we have a situation in which Romania stands in our way. But if we send the letter earlier that means we would mess things up. They will notify the Chinese and, in general, they will be against [it], because it is not their initiative.

[...]

*Brezhnev:* It looks as if, with a heavy heart, Andropov or I would have to go to them and say: Comrades, members of the Politburo, I have instructions from the CC to relay to you this idea. The war is going on, we are passing many documents, but this is not everything. Even though relations with the Chinese are bad, nevertheless this is a socialist country. It would be good if all of us approached the Chinese with such-and-such a matter. And here we would let them understand what constitutes the content of our letter without showing the letter itself. (Gomułka: This will not work). Ceaușescu will respond: We will discuss it at the Politburo, if not at the CC. This means that it will take 3–4 days, and maybe even a week. And we will have to go there for a second time. He will not provide an answer the first time. He will think of what to come up with.

[...]

*Gomułka:* The Romanians maintain good relations with the Bulgarians, but even if Cde. Zhivkov goes to them in person, they will not sign it even then.

*Zhivkov:* Yes, I think they would not agree. We need to take advantage of the time.

*Gomułka:* They will say that they have to consult on it and coordinate with the Chinese comrades, etc.

[...]

*Brezhnev:* At the first stage we will do the following: we, along with the PUWP, will work on the draft given that [there are] no ciphers, no ambassadors; the responsible secretaries of the CC will go in person. We will consult with the Koreans as to whether they fundamentally support such an idea. We can present to Kim Il Sung the essence of our proposal. If he says “no” because he is dependent on [this or that], etc. (he told me about it), then our internal variant remains.

[...]

Gomułka: There is still one more thing—in what language is it to be written? The Romanians will say they will only sign if it is in Romanian. I think we can write it in Russian and include copies in all languages. The copies could also be signed, because the Romanians will not sign a Russian text.

[...]

*Kádár:* [...] First, Cde. Brezhnev will dispatch his personal representative, Andropov, to three parties: the Korean, and on the way back to Tsedenbal and Ceaușescu, given that he will not go on behalf of the Politburo, but that he will be your personal envoy. Let him say: I would like to hear your personal opinion. One can conclude from the reaction of the interlocutor what his attitude towards the matter is.

And afterwards, the second level. If Ceaușescu does not agree to the idea itself, then we have nothing to talk about. And then in order to avoid unpleasant consequences, we will come out, not as the Warsaw Pact, but as six parties which support this idea. If, however, the idea is acceptable to him, then we can take the second step.

[...]

*Kádár:* We don't need to mention the Warsaw Pact. And if the Romanians do not agree, then we will come out as six parties. This is our holy right to come out jointly.

[...]

[Source: *Archiwum Akt Nowych, KC PZPR XI A/13, Warsaw. Translated by Małgorzata Gnoińska for the George Washington Cold War Group.*]