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Hungarian Socialist Workers Party First Secretary János Kádár's Account of His Visit to Moscow to the HSWP Central Committee

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Summary:

János Kádár presents on his diplomatic trip to Moscow to the Hungarian Central Committee. Kádár first places the Cuban Missile Crisis in context. This includes describing the success of the Cuban revolution, US aggression towards Cuba, and the Cuban-Soviet military and defense agreement, which ultimately spawned the US's unilateral military mobilization. Kádár then describes the Soviet Union's strategy to achieve two goals: protect the Cuban revolution and preserve peace. He notes that Cuba and the Soviet Union disagree about how the crisis was resolved, but asks the congress of workers to show complete support of Soviet actions and successes.

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Attended: the members and the alternates of the Central Committee, the Heads of departments of the Central Committee—according to the attached list, along with the Chairman of the Central Revision Committee.

[...]

Comrade Lajos Fehér:

I welcome all the comrades. The first item on the agenda is the negotiation of the congressional report, presenter: Comrade János Kádár.

Comrade János Kádár:

Last week, pursuant to the [HSWP] Political Committee's [i.e., Politburo's^[1]] decision, I was in Moscow, I met with the Soviet comrades, and if you allow me, before I move on to the actual agenda, I would like to mention certain details concerning this trip.

The first and perhaps the most important is, that neither from our side, nor from the Soviet comrades' side, did arise any kind of burning question, what would have pressed this meeting. But as it turned out, last Sunday [4 November 1962] the Soviet comrades and we independently from each other thought that a meeting would not be wrong in this situation. As you know, on different issues though, but discussions were going on with most of the sister parties from the member countries of the Warsaw Pact during the previous days and week. We also had to take into account that people may misunderstand the situation here: such negotiations are ongoing with all parties, but not with us. Last week on Monday [November 5] we contacted Comrade Khrushchev via phone and we mentioned this, and we agreed that such a meeting never does harm.

At the discussion we naturally dealt with various issues of the international situation and with several current economic problems in the Hungarian-Soviet relationship. The meeting was useful and had a cordial atmosphere. Entirely new issues were not brought up or raised, we only clarified the situation on a few known issues and realized that we share the same opinion in all of the relevant issues. And it is splendid.

On the 8th I spent almost the whole day with the Soviet comrades. The company was more than just the members mentioned in the communiqué, there were other comrades from the Central Committee, and their relatives were involved too. The atmosphere was as if the Soviet comrades would have been just amongst themselves.

I was urged by Comrade Khrushchev, [Frol] Kozlov, [Leonid] Brezhnev, [Rodion] Malinovsky, and all comrades one by one and also together to forward their best wishes and greetings. I told them that a Central Committee meeting would be held on Monday. Also in the name of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union they wished our party a pleasant work for the Congress. I felt it necessary to share this.

As to the agenda:^[2] firstly, I would like to mention, that the external conditions for preparing the report were not very favorable, because the amount of time that we were to spend on this work, due to the tension of the international situation, the Political Committee could not devote to this. This text which is in your hands should be evaluated as follows: at a certain point it seemed that it was necessary to prepare a report after all, because of this I have dictated a text. Afterwards a four-member committee, set up for this purpose, dealt with this text: Comrade Szirmai, Comrade Orbán, Comrades Darvasi, and Endre Molnár are involved, who assist in data collection and wording. Then this draft was put on the agenda of and discussed in the Political Committee, then

the Political Committee's comments—this again relates to my trip—were included in the text by the committee in question. Currently, this is how the case stands.

Regarding the future,—I will tell you this soon—if the Central Committee will have discussed the text which is to become the basis of the report and if the main directives are accepted, all we have to do is to finish it in two days and then, I think, I have to work on it to make the language smooth—and this will become the report. This is the idea. The work itself has requirements that around Thursday morning or shortly after we have to hand it over for translation, otherwise the Congress cannot work properly, because they have to hand the text to the foreigners. Currently, these are the conditions of the work. This additional work, of course, cannot differ from the approved principles.

I would like to mention, that in certain international issues one must take sides clearly and precisely. Now, briefly I wish to say a few words concerning these international issues.

First, of the Cuban question. The root of the question that raises great international tension, is the victorious people's revolution in Cuba that evolved further into a socialist revolution which has been constantly undermined by the United States imperialist circles from the beginning in hope of crushing, overrunning, terminating the Cuban revolution. Concerning the issue—most likely justly—the US sees a great, lethal danger against the country. Especially since the Cuban revolution shook all of Latin America under the American imperialists' feet. Since these South American and Latin American countries are colonies of the United States and the situation differs entirely from what the official reports declare in the United States. Furthermore, the domestic situation in these Latin American countries, the citizen's spirits, views, ambitions, hopes, fights are not the same as the American diplomats' views and positions talking there on behalf of them. Therefore the existence of the Cuban revolution indeed, means a lethal danger for the domination of the United States. This is the reason why the only goal was—through the economic embargo, through diplomatic tools, and through aggression if necessary—to annihilate the Cuban revolution. This is the root of the tension concerning Cuba. And these steps were carried into effect consecutively in the United States. The United States attempted political isolation, had already introduced an economic blockade around Cuba in order to crush the country economically. Also, they attempted invading the country by armed counter revolutionists last April. Hence, introducing all means available. Apparently inefficiently. The fact, that the United States was not able to achieve its goals by any means—that have been previously mentioned—depended solely on the determination and endurance of the Cuban people [and] furthermore on the brotherly help that the Cuban people enjoy on behalf of the entire socialist world and other progressive international partners. I do not think it is necessary to point out, that in this fight, for Cuba the biggest and primary help has been granted by the Soviet Union.

Due to constant American threatening and different attempts the situation evolved into an actual threat. In the past few months it became evident, that the United States has not refrained from using any means. Consequently, an agreement has been reached between the Soviet government and the Cuban government—a quasi military and defense agreement in which they have agreed that the Soviet government will provide proper weapons to Cuba and place them in the country. This agreement is several months old. The execution itself has been in effect ever since. Evidently, this could not have been kept in secret from the United States forever—though this has not been the intention at all—since in early September the two governments published the agreement in front of the whole world. They declared that such an agreement exists, according to which the Soviet Union grants weapons to Cuba. This event naturally caused general distress in the United States especially within government and imperialist circles. Concerning their former plan of attacking Cuba—we believed that the American government was basically influenced by two main factors: The first being the aggressive circles of the United States Department of Defense that is naturally backed up by the entire weapons industry of the United States, the monopolies that pursue a politics of war and aggression, circles that believe in [the] arms race, circles that suffer from self-delusion and are puffing, bluffing constantly by nature. This factor have been made even worse by a general panic, hence aggression—the belief that they are better and stronger than all the rest—and a general desperation were present simultaneously. These were the two factors that

motivated the American government. It has to be said, that both were visible in the government's actions. Moreover there is a certain minor disagreement between the Pentagon, the interest groups associated with weapons, and another group represented by Kennedy. There is a slight difference between these views and interests, however only minor, not important. In relation to this, the American elections were an external factor. The comrades know what kind of actions the Republican Party Eisenhower, Nixon, and the others have taken [on this issue]. At the end they were agitating that in fact communists were leading the United States. This also forced the government to take different actions. Therefore, the situation became as it was what triggered the events on the 22nd of October on the US government's side.

They announced the Cuban blockade, and were simultaneously prepared for amphibious landings and for a direct American invasion of Cuba. Both were already decided plans on 22 October.

We have to see this as a reckless game, when a certain group does not think of future consequences and puts all its eggs in one basket. This happened on 22 October and actually prevailed throughout this tense period. The Americans were determined to start another World War, rather than giving up on the termination of the Cuban revolution. Steps were taken accordingly. At that time, the ring of naval ships was publicly acknowledged that was set around Cuba. This was one of their force alignments, besides this there was another force alignment: 70 miles from Cuba on American territory significant forces were joined, three or four air transportable, most modernly equipped divisions, marine divisions, etc., namely made up of 7-8 divisions that would have served for the invasion of Cuba.

The third force alignment of the United States' government occurred in the European region, where mostly reactive forces were mobilized. The comrades are familiar with these planes, that carry around nuclear weapons, that have been in use for years. The number of these planes were raised by five times the usual number, then war ships in the navy and those stationed around the European region (equipped with nuclear weapons at the Mediterranean) were joined around Sicily and without mobilizing the entire army were combat ready (including the partial mobilization) that the comrades know very well from the news. This is what the government of the United States has done. Something was also done by the NATO organization, however not as much as the United States has done. What happened there, was the following: the United States did not cross-check these decisions with her allies, legally pulled together the so-called Organization of American States [OAS]—this was the ally who they referred to. The United States did not cross-check these actions with the NATO. Consequently, NATO allies were not that active.

Some kind of monitoring system, a certain preparedness was present in the forces of NATO powers as well, but without any particular mobilization. Thus, this was the situation on the 23rd of October.

In the meantime on our side the following event took place: Cuba ordered a general mobilization, that the Cuban people managed effectively. Approximately one million people were armed during that time. The Soviet army was put in combat readiness, without calling in reserves. Essentially, the same happened with the rest of the armies of the Warsaw Treaty. In our country also. Not the entire army [was mobilized], but at certain divisions from air defense, air reconnaissance, and also at certain land forces preparedness was ordered by our government, since in times like these, all means of defense should be available.

In connection with this, I would like to mention a fact that is certainly well known by the comrades, that in this critical situation and also in the context of these measures our army both in the senior leadership, and in the entire personnel of the army, the behavior and the attitude was commendable. There was serenity, determination, and solidarity. Similarly, the population's behavior is well known by the comrades. You all know perfectly, that comparing to the last year's tension [regarding Berlin] it can only be said that our population stood one's ground calmly and politically well. This is a crucial point in this situation. It can be said, that testimony of high skill of political maturity, consciousness, correct political behavior were shown by the Hungarian masses,

the toilers, and this discipline obviously demonstrates a general and fundamental trust towards the Soviet political system, towards the policy of our party and government. People knew that the situation was serious, but they did not have knowledge of the details, the moments, the hourly changing situation, they had no information and yet the Hungarian working people behaved so honorably in this situation, which is an evidence of general and fundamental trust in the matter of the socialism, towards the forces of peace, towards the Soviet Government's policy and towards the Hungarian Government's policy. This is a rejoicing and a very significant thing!

What is to be done by responsible parties in this situation? Here I mean the affair in the afternoon of the 23rd [of October], when the ships were due to meet.

When I gave a toast on the 8th [of November] in Moscow I also mentioned that in a situation like this I would like to be anybody but Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev. Generally we envy everybody, except the Soviet leaders, because their position is like no others'. I said, that the view here is that at a push or if we cannot find a solution in an issue we can always go somewhere, we go to Moscow, and one will surely be smarter from it. But where you go in critical situations that are hard to tackle, that's your secret. But they cannot go anywhere. It can be said that an enormous responsibility rests on the Soviet comrades, when socialism, the socialist revolution, the cause of progress, the case of peace should be protected. In this situation the question was not the blockade, because the blockade is the blockade, that had to be there in Cuba. Actually, the issue here was the clash. The Americans were ready for the amphibious landing. A certain kind of minor clash did indeed happen. The main issue was not the blockade, between the US warships and the Soviet ships since there was a certain manoeuvring in order to delay the clash. The joined forces of the United States began the landing and the invasion of Cuba. Meanwhile, one of their reconnaissance aircraft was shot [down] over Cuba [on 27 October]. This aircraft is also significant, because in such an impulsive situation it happened for the first time—and I would say, from our side—that a weapon was used. Two anti-missile projectiles were launched—the two together means a 100% effectiveness—and the aircraft was shot down indeed. Such a situation occurred. What could be done if the options seemed like the Americans would manage the landing in Cuba or would arrive to the shores of Cuba? A strike should be launched at the United States. This is inevitable, it is not possible to fight in any other way. Furthermore, if they land in Cuba, they shall be destroyed. These two options together—this is not so difficult to figure it out—would have meant, that the main goal in this particular issue is the rescue of Cuba, or otherwise Cuba will be destroyed. That was the Third World War's seat of the fire, and in that case, that would not leave anything behind. The other [option] was that the [political] fight begins.

The Soviet comrades were thinking in that situation, and they came to the decision that is known to us. The opinion of the Soviet comrades in this issue is—and it is necessary to tell, that when we here were analyzing the situation, we were lead to the same conclusion—that the two basic goals are the protection of the Cuban revolution and the preservation of peace.

The decisions made by the Soviet Government served these two basic goals superbly. The US government declared that there were offensive weapons there and therefore they would attack Cuba in the spirit of self-defence. The Soviet Government therefore decided to pull-out these offensive weapons. Only the United States shall declare, that Cuba will not be attacked. Then the two main goals have been reached. That is what essentially happened.

The opinion of the Soviet comrades is, that these weapons have accomplished their task, without being compelled to shoot with them. Because neither the Soviet, nor the Cuban government's plan was to deploy any weapons there and then attack the United States, but to deter the enemy and protect Cuba and the Cuban revolution. Certainly, during those hours it looked—and there were such voices in the United States—as if the Soviet Union had retreated. But after two days, these people realized too, that they have not achieved the same thing as they wanted, and started to rampage and began to attack their own government anew. How come that non-aggression will be guaranteed? If the Cuban revolution remains and the United States guarantees non-aggression, they are in the same situation as they were, indeed, in a worse situation. Because, so far—since

the victory of the revolution in Cuba—they always pronounced that they would destroy it and now they had to declare that they shall respect Cuba.

This was a truly responsible, correct, and revolutionary communist measure. It has served the fundamental purpose. What is there currently? Currently, the situation is that the United States is in diplomatic hot water and the wrestling is going on with the usual devices of politics. The United States Government invented that there are some kind of bombers [i.e., the IL-28s], and those shall be pulled out, too. The reply for this was that those are basically not offensive, and this is the point where the usual political and diplomatic wrestling starts, which means, that the issue is not completely solved yet. Simply we are far from that moment now, where we were in the afternoon on the 23rd of October, when the world and mankind was on the eve of the Third World War. We are far from that now. The issue has not been solved completely yet, the usual political and diplomatic struggle is still going on—of course, the Soviet government made it clear for the US government that they may keep on complaining about these bombers if they want, but they should think it over too, because the original situation can be set back.

And from that there is nothing good for the United States. Probably this political question now roughly will be resolved. I am saying roughly, because American imperialism will remain and the Cuban revolution will remain, too. And the two countries will continue to be neighbors. So the problem will be solved in this sense. Eventually, the irreconcilable antagonism will remain.

Anyway, probably we will return to our original position and will continue the old fight. The Soviet government promised to the United States, that after the elections have finished in the US, the Berlin issue will be brought up. And this promise will be kept by them. The wrestling will continue in this question as well. Similarly, the negotiations on the termination of nuclear-weapon tests, and the conclusion of an agreement will be put on the agenda, which is a realistic option. Currently it looks that it is realistic. It is possible that such an agreement will be concluded. Apart from that, it is quite clear to us, that from this tension the world's people have learnt a lesson and we have to continue our general anti-imperialist propaganda and fight increasingly, to continue the fight in the issue of general disarmament, the elimination of the Cold War, etc. It is certain, that the conditions for this are much better than previously. The United States with her steps resulting from aggression and panic exposed herself completely as illegitimate, provocative, offensive, etc. Therefore people know that the preservation of peace was threatened greatly by the US Government and the Soviet Government was the one who saved humanity's peace. Currently this is the situation. For us the situation is the same as it was previously, we adopt the same policy, but at the same time vigilance is necessary, a certain level of readiness is necessary and the previous fight goes on. I would like to mention too, that in the general situation there are things also that are not the most pleasing for us. For example, the Soviet government's and the Cuban government's views are not exactly the same in certain issues. The situation is that not everything could be reconciled in those critical hours. It was not like the First World War in 1914, when there were six months for the parties to mobilize the forces to begin a serious clash, here it was about half-hours and [periods of] fifteen minutes. The Cuban government has some views that are not identical with the Soviet government's views. All in all, this not a world disaster, because at the same time, on the main questions there is consensus, but still, it left a small gap, wherein immediately joined our Chinese comrades, and with their usual revolutionary behavior they are hitting the tambourine. Why retreat, etc. ...

They interpret the measures of the Soviet government as concessions. For us, this is the inconvenient aspect of the situation, but we hope that the correct opinions will fully prevail. This situation will be clear and they will understand that with blustering, with phrases, and with slogans like "down with imperialism!" the world can be brought to flames extremely quickly. And it is not the communists' task to set the world on fire. This is the same as the principle of peaceful coexistence. If it is not a correct principle, then it has a logic. If that is impossible, then the other possibility has to be applied and then the Soviet Union has to start the war. If there is no chance of resolving the conflict peacefully ... This is why the Chinese comrades' logic cannot be accepted, besides, it is not Marxist, it is not realistic, it does not reflect reality.

Regarding our Congress, the topic on the agenda means...I ask for the compliance of the Central Committee, so we may clearly and unmistakably express that we absolutely agree—not only generally with the behavior and the decisions of the Soviet government but—also with the questions concerning Cuba and that we feel absolute solidarity towards those decisions. Those meet the interests of the Hungarian people, and they also meet the interests of the Hungarian revolution as well as the interests of the international proletariat.

[...]

[1] Here and below, the term “Political Committee” is used for this top-ranking party body, which was functionally equivalent to the “Political Bureau” or “Politburo” as it was called in some Communist countries, but not in Hungary—CB and MK.

[2] This Central Committee meeting was dedicated to discussing the report of the Political Committee for the forthcoming 8th congress of the HSWP that was held in November 1962—CB and MK.