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Report of János Kádár to the Political Bureau of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party About his Meeting with Mao Zedong on 27 September 1957

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Summary:

Mao Zedong describes the current campaign in China against "rightist" elements. Kádár then provides a detailed analysis of the 1956 uprising in Hungary and its aftermath.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Comrade Mao Zedong received the members and entourage of the Hungarian government delegation on the day of their arrival, at 10 PM, and, in the presence of the members of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party's Political Bureau, had a conversation of approx. 3 hours with them. On the Chinese side, Comrades Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun, He Long, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhang Wentian, as well as Comrade Hao Deqing, the Chinese ambassador in Budapest, participated; on the Hungarian side, Comrades János Kádár, György Marosán, and Sándor Nógrádi, as well as the members of the government delegation were present; and both the Chinese and the Hungarian side had its own interpreter.

By way of introduction, Comrade Kádár forwarded the greetings of the Hungarian Communists and the Hungarian people to Comrade Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists. He said thanks for the great assistance that the Chinese Communists had provided in the recent period.

Then it was Comrade Mao Zedong's turn to speak. He stated that the Hungarian comrades "have been working well" since the events in October [1956]. Concerning the Hungarian events in October, he said that this was a "very good" thing. With regard to this issue, he promptly started to describe the Chinese situation, above all, the struggle against rightists. He said that when the movement aimed to improve the [work] style of the Chinese party was launched in May [1957], they created an atmosphere in which everyone could freely voice his opinion, and the people could say good things, bad things, whatever they wanted. This way one could see clearly, and on this basis, one could create a clear situation. The right wing, which is composed of the bourgeoisie and a part of the bourgeois intelligentsia, took advantage of this opportunity to launch an attack against the party. According to Comrade Mao Zedong, this attack was "very strong," which is further confirmed by the fact that similarly to the Hungarian events in October, nearly every state institution, office, school, etc., produced its own "little" Imre Nagy. For approximately two weeks, the rightists did nearly all the talking; during these two weeks, [events akin to] the antecedents of the Hungarian October events occurred in many places, on a small scale. This period was a time of crucible for the cadres, party members, party committees, and party secretaries, for they received no directive from above about [how to] behave and [which] position to adopt; prohibited from speaking, they were allowed only to listen to [the complaints]. For two weeks, many of them could not sleep. Many of them wept. Many of them began to waver, and there were even some persons who, under the pressure of the rightists, deserted the standpoint of the party, and joined the rightists. (Of the three million intellectual party members, 0.5 percent joined the rightists, that is, one out of every hundred people.) In several places, the rightists actually took over the leadership. (Comrade Mao Zedong remarked that now it was precisely these places where conditions were the best: the sharper the conflict was and the more a rift occurred, the clearer the situation has become, and the clearer vision the masses have there now.)

The situation started to change approximately from the third week on, when at first the non-party leftists and the [leftists] belonging to the democratic parties, the leftist intellectuals loyal to the party, took a stand against the rightists. The reason of why it happened so was that there are relatively few intellectuals within the party, and the non-intellectual party members initially did not participate in the debate. By now, the struggle against the right wing has reinforced the position of the left wing, the wavering ones (the middle strata) have become firmer, or they have been won over to the standpoint of the party, and the right wing has become isolated.

By the way, the movement aimed at improving work style - richer by the experiences gained in the struggle against the rightists, and utilizing these [experiences] - currently goes on in the factories and villages, and according to the plan, it will last until the next May 1st, that is, altogether for a whole year. Taking the great size of the country into consideration, one needs this amount of time for the effective

implementation of the movement.

While evaluating what happened, one might raise the question: why did it happen that it was the intelligentsia, the bourgeois intelligentsia, who became the spokesman of the rightist views? At present, the remnants of the landowner class, [and] the former Guomindang officers and officials no longer have any mass influence and mass basis in China. By now, only the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia have remained capable of action. Their representatives hold positions in the state and government offices, and thus their influence is great. At first, [we] could not dispense with them: they are the engineers, scientists, artists, and technical experts. The overwhelming majority of them are still needed, one cannot work without them, but one must re-educate them, because they cannot serve the cause of socialist construction with a bourgeois ideological disposition. However, this re-education is a long and complicated process, and it might even last longer than a decade.

The activation and attack of the bourgeois right wing also confirms that the class struggle has not ended yet. At present, the main contradiction in China is no longer the one between landownership and the proletariat, or between the Guomindang and the proletariat, but between the bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia and the proletariat, that is, in essence between capitalism and socialism. The contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as the main contradiction, might last decades (10, 20, or 30 years) in China. What recently occurred in China during the struggle against the rightists was a veritable political revolution, which has created a clear situation: the mask of the bourgeoisie has fallen, and its objectives have become obvious. During the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the mainstay of the Chinese party was the poor peasantry and the working class (the majority of the Chinese Communist Party [membership] is composed of semi-proletarians, i.e., mainly workers and poor peasants). True, there is also an ongoing process of differentiation within the peasantry (the peasants who became wealthier later joined the bourgeoisie, and so on). During the current struggle against the rightists, it has become obvious that some people, partly from the circle of intellectuals and partly from that of the well-to-do peasants, will have to be expelled from the ranks of the party, because their thinking is dominated by the elements of bourgeois ideology.

Then it was again Comrade Kádár's turn to speak. By way of introduction, he briefly described the current situation in Hungary, and stated that we had already solved the essential, important but relatively simple questions, and what was still left to do was to solve the less important but more complicated problems. Concerning the events in October, he stated that these events enabled the contradictions to come to the surface, which also created a simpler, clear situation. On the basis of this [factor], and of the rich experiences gained from the events, one may say that the counter-revolution "was a good thing."

While describing the causes of the October events, Comrade Kádár analyzed the situation of the various Hungarian social strata and classes after liberation [1945], and before the October counter-revolution, as follows:

Following liberation, the living standards of the working class generally improved, but not to a sufficient extent and not sufficiently fast. In the inflationary period right after liberation (1945-46), the working class bore the heaviest burdens, it was [the stratum] most adversely affected by the inflation. After 1951, the promised increase of living standards ground to a halt. This fact, and other causes to be described in the following, weakened the working class' trust in the party and the previous leaders.

Following liberation, it was the peasantry who gained most from the people's democracy (land reform, etc.). Its living standards also increased faster and to a greater extent [than that of the working class]. The peasantry by no means desires the restoration of the old [pre-1945] regime, [and] this is why it behaved soberly

during the counter-revolution in October. However, it is also reluctant to move forward, it is the current situation that it considers most favorable. (Here, Comrade Mao Zedong remarked: it seems that in Hungary, the peasantry is the reserve force of the revolution, and this is very good. In Italy, the situation is similar, whereas in France the French bourgeoisie corrupts the peasantry.)

The Hungarian intelligentsia, which played an important role in the October events and in the latter's preparatory stage, is composed of a smaller upper stratum and a broad middle and lower stratum. The upper stratum generally lived better before liberation than after it. The situation of the middle and lower strata has improved if compared to the pre-liberation [conditions], but in its ranks, the influence of the discontented upper stratum was greater, and made a stronger impact. In essence, the revolt of a segment of the intelligentsia constituted the prelude of the October events.

In the following, Comrade Kádár spoke about the role of the party. During and after October, many people raised the question: where had been the party? In 1953, the leadership of the HWP [Hungarian Workers' Party] sincerely revealed the errors, but during the three years from 1953 to July 1956, it did not correct them. This way, since the errors were revealed openly, in front of the masses but they were not corrected, the party slowly lost the trust of the masses. The resolution passed in July 1956 constituted a suitable basis for the correction of the errors, the unity of the party leadership was also achieved, but during the short period left until October, this factor could not produce any effect.

Before October, there were essentially two main groups confronting each other within the old party leadership: the group of persons loyal to the people's republic and the people's democracy, and [the faction of] Imre Nagy. However, even within the former [group], a political and principled struggle was going on between the erroneous methods of leadership associated with Rákosi, Gerő, and Hegedüs and the [group] of Comrade Kádár. The former leaders used dogmatic, sectarian methods that [became] detached from the masses. In contrast, the [group] of Comrade Kádár, having been excluded from the leadership for a too long time, did not immediately become aware of the situation in every respect. Within the group of Rákosi, Gerő, and Hegedüs, and between the conduct of the individual leaders, there were slight differences, but they were of the same sectarian disposition. In July 1956, the wing loyal to the people's republic and the people's democracy achieved political and principled unity, but this could not bring forth fruit [during the time left] until October.

This is how [we] got to October. When the guns cracked, it became obvious that this was an armed counter-revolution, which could be suppressed only by armed force. One and a half hour after the first crack of a rifle, [the leadership] did pass a resolution on [the suppression of the counter-revolution], but it could not be carried out. The leadership did not know where the enemy was and whence it attacked, but they [the counter-revolutionaries], thanks to the [faction] of Imre Nagy, knew where the party leadership was and what it was planning to do. At first, the forces loyal to socialism were undoubtedly greater [than the enemy]. The Communists, who numbered several hundred thousands, would have been ready to grab arms, but there was no united leadership. The number of the counter-revolutionaries was smaller, but they were united, and they knew what they wanted. After November 4th, the situation was like the conditions during a flood: there was no time for pondering, one had to rush to tackle the disaster, and to save whatever could be saved. Since the basic line of development was correct, by now the situation has changed. It has become stable, and the party has grown stronger than it was a year before, because its membership passed the ordeal of the November-December period.

What is the situation of the members of the old leadership? This February, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party passed a resolution, according to which the old leaders, who currently reside in the Soviet Union, might return home a year later -

with the exception of Rákosi and Gerő - and get involved in [our] work, but they must start everything from the beginning, from below. (Comrade Mao Zedong interjected: "Wouldn't it be a bit too early?" Comrade Kádár: "Then we will struggle against them!") The members of the old leadership adopted different attitudes toward their erroneous views. For instance, Gerő does not admit his errors, but he submits himself to the resolution. (Interjection of Comrade Mao Zedong: „Actually, Gerő's speech in October, which disparaged the masses, was also wholly erroneous, it reflected his complete detachment from the masses. While acknowledging the justified [protest] movement of the masses, he should also have drawn attention to the fact that the counter-revolution, the enemy might take advantage of this movement.")

Then Comrade Kádár dealt with the errors and behavior of Rákosi. Rákosi still holds the view that he was right, he does not admit any [errors], and he demands to be reinstalled as leader. This March, he wrote a letter to the Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in which he also sought to prove that he was right. In his opinion, the reason of why the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had only 200.000 members at that time, and why the other 600.000 members of the HWP did not ask for re-registration [as HSWP members], was that they were waiting for his return. (General merriment among the Chinese comrades. Comrade Mao Zedong: "This [guy] is not a Marxist!" "He has become completely detached from reality!") Rákosi does not recognize the current Hungarian leadership, and regards the leading Hungarian comrades as middlemen of Imre Nagy and Tito.

(The information about Rákosi's conduct and his letter generated great interest among the Chinese comrades. They were obviously unaware of the fact that [he] had written [such] a letter. The described details of his letter evoked merriment, rather than surprise, the Chinese comrades responded to Comrade Kádár's statements about Rákosi by making vivid interjections and comments among themselves.)

In Rákosi's view, his case cannot be settled just by two parties (the Soviet and Hungarian ones). There is no legal basis for keeping him in the Soviet Union, for then those Soviet comrades who previously committed errors should be sent to China. (General merriment. Zhou Enlai: "Pure nonsense!") According to Rákosi's letter, it was certain that he would be welcome in China and Vietnam, too, for he was actually invited to these countries. (Consternation, merriment.) Mao Zedong (laughing): "Well, our country is big enough! (Seriously:) Still, he should stay where he is, we do not need him! We kept Li Lisan in the Soviet Union for 15 years, but it seems that for Rákosi, even a period twice as long would not be enough!" Comrade Kádár: "He has changed from a Communist into a ridiculous old man; in the earlier times, he became dizzy with power. He will never admit his errors." Mao Zedong: "Stalin should practice self-criticism for having made such a ‘good choice' with Rákosi!" (Of course, Rákosi's role in the Hungarian workers' movement must be evaluated in an objective way, taking both his errors and merits into consideration, and this is how one should draw the final conclusion. Mao Zedong: "But this will not be a positive [conclusion]!")

Then Comrade Kádár dealt with certain members of the old leadership who were still active. Of the old, closed group of leaders, there are only three comrades who work in functions of greater or lesser importance: József Révai, Gyula Egri, and Béla Vég. The others, of course, harbor a certain personal resentment. By the way, two-thirds of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party were also members of the HWP Central Committee, and the same holds true for 50 percent of the Political Bureau of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, but now they work well. Now the party is far stronger than it was [before October], though its present membership is smaller, 381.000. The overwhelming majority of the party membership will have none of Gerő's group. The number of party members is not to be increased further in the future, for one weak point of the HWP was that it had swollen too much. In Horthy's Hungary, the illegal party had only 5.000-6.000 members. (Interjection of Comrade Mao Zedong: "They asked where the party was. Well, here it is! But where is Rákosi? By the way, the ranks of the Chinese party will also be thinned; here, too, a

substantial part of the membership joined the party [only] after liberation. They have no serious revolutionary experiences.")

Finally, Comrade Kádár, while speaking about the next tasks of ideological work, highlighted those slogans with which the enemy operated before, during, and after October, and whose remnants still existed. These are the slogans of nationalism, "freedom," and "real democracy," as well as social demagogy (raising the living standards, and so on). (Amid merriment, Mao Zedong jokingly remarked that the aforesaid three "principles" were similar to the famous three principles of Sun Yat-sen, the San Min Zhuyi: nationalism, democracy, and social welfare. Mao Zedong pointed out that the aforesaid slogans and the enemy's slogans in Hungary were of bourgeois origin, and he used this issue as an additional argument to [show] the necessity of the struggle against bourgeois ideology. In conclusion, he again drew attention to the perspectives of the struggle between the roads of socialism and capitalism, and once again emphasized that in the coming times, the main contradiction would continue to occur between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.)

During the whole time, the Chinese comrades followed the conversation with very great attention and interest, and all of them took shorter or longer notes. They devoted particular attention to those parts in Comrade Kádár's description in which he informed them about the causes of the October events, the errors of the old leadership, the social situation of the masses, etc. In certain cases, they also discussed some of the more important questions among themselves in a few words. Apart from Comrade Mao Zedong, Comrade Zhou Enlai also occasionally participated in the conversation.