

March 24, 1989

Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and Karoly Grosz, General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, March 23-24, 1989

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Summary:

These conversations reveal Gorbachev's contradictions, as the Soviet leader proclaims again that the Brezhnev doctrine is dead and military interventions should be "precluded in the future, yet at the same time, tries to set "boundaries" for the changes in Eastern Europe as "the safekeeping of socialism and assurance of stability."

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**Memorandum of Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and Károly Grósz,
General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party**

Moscow, 23-24 March 1989

Excerpt

HUNGARIAN SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

CENTRAL COMMITTEE TOP SECRET

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REPORT

for members of the Political Committee

[29 March 1989]

[...]

I.

Comrade Grósz informed the negotiators about the Hungarian situation. He said that the events in Hungary have lately accelerated. Their direction is according to our intentions, while their pace is somewhat disconcerting. Comrade Grósz emphasized that we wish to retain political power and find a solution to our problems by political means, avoiding armed conflict.

We have a good opportunity for reaching our goals. People are afraid of a possible armed conflict. Workers, peasants and professionals want to work and live in peace and security, safeguarding their property. [...]

Another major concern is the history of the last thirty years. We have to face our past, hard and painful as it is, the acting participants still being alive. On the other hand, by drawing the necessary conclusions, we might dishearten certain layers of our policy's active supporters in the party. Lack of self-confidence is palpable enough in the party anyway. [...]

Comrade Gorbachev agreed that the Western world does not want instability in Eastern Europe, including Hungary as well, because in the present situation it would be adverse to their interests. Nonetheless, it is quite apparent that they intend to facilitate the realization and strengthening of a development which suits their own political ideas.

Comrade Gorbachev emphasized: "The assessment of the events of 1956 is entirely up to you." You have to stand on firm ground; you have to examine what really happened then and there. The Soviet leadership has recently analyzed the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, and they continue to maintain that what happened there was a counterrevolution, with all the idiosyncratic traits of such an event. There were different periods within the Czechoslovak events, but the Dubcek regime was unable to prevent counter-revolutionary forces from gaining ground through them. [...]

Comrade Gorbachev emphasized that we clearly have to draw boundaries, thinking about others and ourselves at the same time. Democracy is much needed, and interests have to be harmonized. The limit, however, is the safekeeping of socialism and assurance of stability.

Comrade Grósz emphasized that when referring to 1956, we adhere to the original evaluation that the party endorsed in December 1956. The process is described in three consecutive words [sic]: student protest, uprising, and counter-revolution.

Comrade Gorbachev agreed with the above. He emphasized that today we have to preclude the possibility of repeated foreign intervention in the internal affairs of socialist countries. [...]

MOL M-KS-288-11/4458 o.e. Document obtained by Magdolna Baráth. Translated by Csaba Farkas.

(From *Political Transition in Hungary, 1989-1990; International Conference, June 12, 1999, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest; A Compendium of Declassified Documents and Chronology of Events*)

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