

Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL) – Hungarian National Archive

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6-13 0080/20 Kádár elvtárs és Thatcher brit miniszterelnök asszony találkozója
[Thatcher's name is mistyped, the left out "h" is inserted afterwards] – **Meeting of Comrade Kádár and Thatcher British prime minister**

On the cover: "Please file and copy it! Rák R. 02.15. *[signature of R. Rák]*"

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FOREIGN OFFICE

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MEMORANDUM

About the meeting of Comrade János Kádár and Margaret Thatcher British prime minister
/3 February 1984/

The conversation was started by *[ex]*changing sentences about the unfavourable weather accompanying the visit and the fog. Following this, Comrade Kádár alluding to his old bad habit asked the permission of Mrs Thatcher to smoke. Doctors were suffering with him for a long time to make him stop smoking, or to decrease the amount of smoking. Replying to this he always mentions an anecdote, according to which the priest calls the believer who leads a sinful life and urges him to convert. "It is too late for me, Father", says the believer. "My child", says the priest, "do not forget that it is never too late to convert". "Then why are you harrassing me?", replies the believer.

Following this, Comrade Kádár also formally greeted Mrs Thatcher. He expressed his happiness that the visit took place, especially in such an internationally tense situation. We are conscious of the fact that the realisation of the visit needed a certain courage from Thatcher's part. We greet her decision and thank her interest. The opportunity has to be taken to express our thanks for the support and understanding standpoint of the British government at the time when the paying scale

[under the text handwritten file number of the text: "(30.d.) XIX-J-1-j-Anglia-6-13-0080/20/1984"]

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and financial situation of Hungary *pro tempore* became uncertain. By the way Hungary pays rather huge attention to fulfill her payments internationally always accurately and on time. It was like this always, and it will be like this in future as well. In 1956, e.g., when there were civil war situations in Hungary, arms were thundering in Budapest, but the country even

at that time accurately fulfilled her payment duties. Once he and Mrs Thatcher almost met at the funeral of President Tito, which was a rather special situation. Everybody felt that they should be present. At the same time due to the funeral ceremony, even though the good organisation, the leaders of the world had to wait for a long time crowded together in one place. There, looking around their eyes met, and it seems that the meeting may take place, but in the end it did not. Returning to home Comrade Kádár told his colleagues that he had seen Mrs Thatcher, who has eyes and uses them to look with them thoroughly as well. Comrade Kádár suggested that now that they have the opportunity to meet in person they should use the available time for unbound conversation about questions that interest the prime minister.

Mrs Thatcher also expressed her happiness that her Hungarian visit had taken place. She stressed that she came to Hungary for Hungary and that the visit in itself from the viewpoint of bilateral relations has already huge importance. She is very much conscious of the fact that she is the first British prime minister to visit Hungary, and that she makes up with this a huge leeway and emptiness. In Great Britain the Hungarians are known as a talented nation. She is conscious about the fact that we belong to another alliance system, but this does not have to be an obstacle for the two

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countries' resultful, good relations. Personal contacts have a great role in improving relations. Several of these have been already created between the two countries. She mentioned as an example that not a lot of time before her journey she was called *[on]* at the Prime Minister's Office by Lord Richardson, former governor of the Bank of England, and asked her to tell his greetings and his good wishes upon her visit to Hungary to Mátyás Tímár, president of the Hungarian National Bank, and suggested her to meet him and talk to him *[i.e. with Tímár]*. This shows *[mirrors]* for sure that a good personal and collegial relationship was created between the two institutions and the two leaders.

Concerning the international frame of the visit it has to be said that it takes place in a tense situation full of worries. Her generation, which had to overcome several things, seeing the tense situation of today wants to do everything to avoid the repetition of tragedy. What has to be done for success? The British government and herself during the summer of 1983 carried out a comprehensive, analytical work including leaders of bureaus and institutions in order to create their strategy until year 2000. They arrived at the conclusion that until the millennium one has to count with the subsistence of different alliance systems, such as EEC, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It is beyond doubt that between the two alliance systems there are remarkable differences and clashes of views. For NATO countries, and therefore also for Great Britain there are ideas which are rather important for us, i.e., freedom, democracy, private enterprise, and they wish to protect these at any cost. At the same time one has to be conscious about the fact that members of the other alliance system, like Hungary, will do everything to protect their ideas. Clashes of views do not have to result in lack of relations or a conflict, taking into consideration that we are connected by the joint interest that we have to live in peace

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together on this planet. For this the biggest efforts have to be made to preserve peace. Contrary to the fact that the relations of superpowers are in many respect determinative, smaller allies like Great Britain and Hungary may also have an important role, superpowers also need friends, and smaller countries by maintaining their bilateral relations can do a lot for reducing the tense of international situation. It was also our conclusion that the other part has to be accepted as it is, agreements and connections have to be created with them as they are, and not the change of their internal system should be pursued. Based on these Thatcher in September 1983 travelled to President Reagan to convince him of the rightness of the approach which characteristics have been described before, and to try to influence the American president to change his politics in the described way.

President Reagan is an honest, good-willing person, it can be claimed without exaggerations that he wishes peace more than anything else. Already regarding his age he is firstly interested to act things which are necessary and good for this.

It was a huge personal disappointment for Reagan when a really short time after taking office, he wrote [*typo in original Hungarian*] a long, rather honest-toned hand-written letter to Brezhnev to which after a long delay he received a rather reticent letter which can be called standard, and which closed itself from the relation-building initiative. After this he felt that he can negotiate with the Soviet Union only from an equal position, and for this the strengthening of the United States' military situation is needed. When Thatcher presented the new approach for Reagan, according to her own impression she managed to convince him, and from September on the American part they wanted to start the modification of lines, the improvement of relations. In the name of these pursuits he renewed

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the crops agreement with the Soviet Union. After this initial step the process was broken abruptly due to the South-Korean airplane incident. According to the claim of President Reagan's speech of 16th September, this is a natural continuation of this broken process after an obligatory pause. This has to be appreciated as a step which mirrors remarkable courage from Reagan's side, as on his right side obviously many did not welcome the speech. The current situation is serious. What does the British government see in front of? With what prospects should one count? Technical progress is advancing with huge steps, which may result in a new armament spiral in case an agreement does not take place on restriction. Probably there is an ideological agreement that the new wave of armament has to be prevented, especially in the field of nuclear, but also in the field of traditional arms as well. However, practical steps are not taken. The prospect of the following 10 months is that the United States will be stiff in the process of election campaign while there is a leader-crisis in the Soviet Union, which mainly arises from the fact that President Andropov cannot be seen for months in public. All this creates colossal insecurity in the international life. Thatcher herself feels that smaller allies have to do everything to improve the situation. She feels she cannot watch the events [*developments*] idly [*original Hungarian expression "with her hands let down in her lap"*], and both in the interest of Great Britain, which country in case of a nuclear war would act out the role of a floating carrier [*the word-to-word Hungarian expression is "mother boat"*], both in the interest of EEC, as well as based on the interests

which can be found in Eastern-Western relations and also in the interest of global problems action has to be taken.

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Comrade Kádár in connection with the things said by Thatcher reacted that he would not say much about international situation, as substantially he agrees with the prime minister's analysis of situation, it is real that there are mutual interests in the field of maintaining peace. The journey of the prime minister was a good decision, it serves a good cause, we greet it. Of course it has to be added that next to the same judgment of situation obviously we less agree in the judgment of factors which triggered the given situation. It also has to be mentioned, that it can be regarded as a bit too generous description that the prime minister characterised both Hungary and Great Britain as smaller allies, since the two countries are not of the same size. Let's rather say that Great Britain is less smaller than Hungary. It is worth mentioning a few words of Hungary's characteristics which should be borne in mind in case the topic is Hungary. Due to Hungary's special geographical and historical capabilities the nationalities living on her territory played an important role. Until 1918, this has to be said openly, these nationalities were oppressed by Hungarians. There is nothing to veneer about this, it is a historical fact. Due to the peace treaty following World War I. Hungary lost 2/3 of her territory. It can be mentioned as an example that Comrade Kádár was born in Rijeka, but as a Hungarian citizen in a Hungarian family. Following the peace treaty the situation changed and the Hungarians became nationalities in the neighbouring countries, something like 5 and half million of them. We accept this, but it has to be said, that this is in the background. Comrade Kádár told this in public as well at the Helsinki Conference in 1975. While he was talking on the podium he saw that after the speech was told the American Foreign Secretary, Kissinger, jumped up from his seat and went to our foreign secretary and talked to him. After the speech Comrade Kádár asked comrade Puja what Kissinger wanted. The reply was that Kissinger quite zealously asked his colleague whether the speech means that we

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reclaim back our old territories. We do not reclaim them, but these facts have to be beared in mind to understand Hungary's situation, as these create us difficulties, with which we have to occupy.

Another thing in connection with what Thatcher said concerning President Reagan: he, i.e. Comrade Kádár has no ground to confute what Thatcher said about Reagan and his pursuits of peace, as he has not yet met him personally. Many claimed the same about Reagan, amongst others vice-president Bush, when he negotiated in Budapest last September. To this only that can be said that from here it does not look like this. By the way concerning the discussions of vice-president Bush, there were no problems here in Budapest, very good and constructive discussions took place. Then of course he went to Vienna and he made a speech that Comrade Kádár does not wish to grade, but it can be mentioned that it was not a succesful speech, it did not help. Thatcher here interfered, that not long time after the speech was made she negotiated with Bush, who expressed her *[not clear whether Thatcher or Bush is supposed to have expressed this opinion – there is no gender in Hungarian, but probably Thatcher is meant]*

serious worry and told her post-reservations in connection with the speech. She was really and seriously worried about its negative influences. She also mentioned that the following weekend Bush would be her guest. To this Comrade Kádár asked Thatcher to send his regards to vice-president Bush.

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Many things connect the countries between an alliance system, the same social structure, same ideological, defence interests, etc. This is like this in the Warsaw Pact and also within NATO. At the same time between the different ally countries there are also remarkable differences. It is enough to allude e.g. to Great Britain and France, these two countries contrary to the fact that they are the same concerning political and social basic institutions, they also show a remarkably big difference in a lot of *[original Hungarian "a row of"]* respects. The way of development, future are also in this territory of the world that countries take into intensified consideration, and adjust their development to national characteristics and national capabilities. If the international situation continues to become more tense, emergency will be created, and then these processes will stop. Those who want not to stop this process, must not take steps that lead to it.

Talking about the topics *[original Hungarian 'things']* of the Third World it has to be mentioned that in the West often a simplified image is drawn of the processes taking place there, and they attribute the different kinds of disturbances of the area to Soviet, GDR and Cuban agents. The reality is that these countries and people live amongst horrible circumstances, and they want to change their fate. If we think about it, it is horrible that while in Europe we are suffering with obesity as a serious health problem, then in the third World masses are inflicted by starvation.

In relations with the Soviet Union it must never be lost from sight that it is a country that from its birth is being accompanied by

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the feeling of threat. It has to be obvious in front of the West that although e. g. the United States in many territories, for example in the number of cars, refrigerators *per capita* is well ahead the Soviet Union, there is a field, with which, by being a life interest one, the Soviet Union always keeps up *[in original Hungarian "keeps up steps with"]* and will always keep up with the United States and the West, and this is the field of armament. It also has to be seen that the Soviet Union sees as different the achievements of her own people as it might seem from the West. They are proud of the achieved results, they fear for them and do everything in their protection. It is enough to think about how the Soviet people fought in World War II. Here Thatcher interjected that she is fully aware how highly Soviet people and the people of the alliance countries of the Warsaw Pact appreciate their own achievements. However, she interjected that for her it is a key question whether the Soviet Union really pursues solution, and whether a really balanced agreement is possible. Looking with the Western eye the Soviet fear mentioned by Comrade Kádár makes it seem as if the Soviet Union was afraid also before World War II, and let's say its security border extended until

Poland, and now this border lies between the GDR and GFR. *[The meaning of this sentence is obscure even in the original Hungarian]* Based on fear is not the next step to draw the new line by the Atlantic Ocean. *[This sentence perhaps should have ended with a question mark, but does not in the original text.]* Here Comrade Kádár corrected Mrs Thatcher by saying that before concerning the Soviet Union he did not use the expression that the Soviet Union is afraid, but said that she *[USSR]* has a feeling of being threatened. On Thatcher raising their view that *[because of the]* the uncertainty in the *[Soviet]* leadership maybe military leaders' influence on *[original Hungarian "role played on"]* politics may have risen, Comrade Kádár replied that the situation is not like that. The highest ranked leader's person is of course important, but the decisions defining

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politics are taken by more persons as a body. Concerning Comrade Andropov, he is an ill man, due to his age he is suffering from different health problems. But what is very important, that although his illness he is mentally fully fresh and is able to work, and in the last period he has continually worked. Due to a certain physical problem he was not able to present himself in public. If you look, e.g. the direction of Soviet politics, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, then you can see that the Soviet politics lead a given line independently from persons. Khrushchev was a rather colourful, short-tempered personality, in those times Comrade Kádár sometimes said that he is like an old bolshevist, when to whom somebody says "Good morning", he immediately hits the person's solar plexus with his fist. But Khrushchev, with whom Comrade Kádár had a good relationship, was a good leader and a big man. Brezhnev was an emotional person, Comrade Kádár had a good, long-lasting relationship with him as well. The acquaintance with Comrade Andropov also traces back for a long time. About him it has to be said that *[one]* who is looking for an opponent, will not benefit *[original Hungarian "will not walk good"]* if he chooses him, but if one seeks a partner, then a very good partner can be found in him, and yes, he honestly wishes the agreement.

At the end of the meeting Thatcher expressed her happiness that the meeting took place, and thanked *[for]* the opportunity for the discussion, she characterised it as very useful and full of content. In the end she asked for the permission of Comrade Kádár that in case she sees that the international situation is escalating to be very dangerous, then she could send him a message. Comrade Kádár signalled that he is not against Thatcher's idea *[original Hungarian word means "raising of idea"]*.

Budapest, 7 February 1984

[under it illegible signature, starting letter is maybe 'B']