

Propaganda Concerning the Signing of the Warsaw Treaty and the Creation of the Warsaw Pact on Hungarian Radio in 1955



Irén Simándi

Sixty years ago, on May 14, 1955, the founding document of the Warsaw Pact was signed by the prime-ministers of the countries adhering to the Warsaw Treaty. The events were followed with particular attention in the broadcasts of the Foreign Affairs section of the Radio the creation of the military bloc received special attention in relation to questions concerning foreign affairs in the countries of the Soviet bloc. The signing of the Warsaw Treaty, Austria's regaining its sovereignty, the resumption of Soviet-Yugoslav negotiations,¹ and the recent Bandung Conference² were the central themes of programmes in May 1955.

The importance of the Warsaw Pact was stressed on the "International Questions" foreign affairs programme of May 18, 1955, in which Lajos Korovszky³ presented the preceding week's historic events as "*the beginning of a new phase in between the ongoing struggle between the forces of peace and war*".

In his presentation, he related that the deliberations of the governmental delegations took place between May 11th and 14th, with the participation of the heads of the governments of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Romania, the Soviet Union, with China present in the capacity of observer. The eight countries "*signed a treaty of friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance, and set up*

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- 1 The Soviet Communist Party Central Committee's decision of May 31, 1954 ordered "information gathering" concerning Yugoslav attitudes and opinions, and urged the mending of the relationship. In his letter to Tito of June 22, Khrushchev offered the regularisation of relations between the two countries and the parties, too. A Soviet delegation under Khrushchev's leadership arrived in Belgrade on May 26. P. SIPOS, *The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, 1945–55*, in: *História*, No. 4, 1992, [s. p.], <http://www.kodaly-bp.sulinet.hu/pefele/Egyetemes%20t%C3%B6rt%C3%A9nelem/Jelenkor/Szovjetuni%C3%B3%20%C3%A9s%20Jugoszl%C3%A1via.pdf>, [cit. 2015–01–04].
 - 2 29 independent Asian and African countries took part in the Bandung Conference, April 18–14, 1955, at which there were calls for the liberation of the countries still under colonial rule and criticism of imperialism and colonialism. http://www.rubicon.hu/magyar/oldalak/1955_aprilis_18_a_bandungi_konferencia_megnyitasa/, [cit. 2015–01–04].
 - 3 Lajos Korolovszky (1915–1977), journalist and leading editor at Hungarian Radio, also reporter for the Hungarian Telegraph Office (wire news agency) in London. From 1968 he worked at Hungarian Television. <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/ABC07165/08430.htm>, [cit. 2015–01–04].



a joint supreme command". The content of the agreement was summarised by the presenter as follows: "One for all, and all for one." While the Warsaw negotiations were taking place, he said, "Soviet proposals for disarmament are beginning to make their effects felt in international opinion, and in Bonn Chancellor Adenauer has taken a stand against them. This is the dearest hope of the one-time Nazis and Hitler's former generals. Protesting against the withdrawal of American troops in hurt tones, Adenauer then makes threatening announcements about the need for the Bonn government to unite all of Germany under its aegis, sweeping away the Oder-Neisse border." Analysing the Chancellor's words, the presenter expressed the view that "at just the right time" these words underlined the "significance of and deep necessity for" of the Warsaw Pact. "After all, it was necessary to call the Warsaw Conference precisely on account of the heightened danger of war as a result of the ratification of the West German rearmament treaty, West Germany's entry into the aggressor camp, NATO, and its entry into a west European union. These actions increasingly endanger the security of the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, and therefore our home, Hungary. The Warsaw agreement was born — he continued — so that the united countries of the peace camp can raise a barrier against these aggressive ambitions, and cry Stop! to the warmongers and adventurers." Emphasising the political significance of the Warsaw Pact, Korovszky said that it was a question of a "defensive" pact which strengthens the bonds of solidarity and unity between the countries of socialism and democracy and makes the relationship between them even closer. He further stressed that, "springing from the countries of the socialist camp's social and political system, their fundamental policy of peace will therefore guard the peace and security of all of Europe, and indeed its future, if these countries close ranks in the defence of their own peace. This," he added, "was a praiseworthy historic role. [...] The treaty of friendly co-operation and mutual assistance is, however, not a closed shop: independent of its social form, any state can join, if it expresses the desire to help in the efforts to unite the peace-loving nations. From this it follows," he continued, "the countries adhering to the Pact have their sights set on a higher aim, and this is an agreement on European collective security. The signatories — as expressed in the Treaty — will strive unceasingly for the achievement of this aim. And should such an agreement come about, the Warsaw Treaty will cease to be valid."

Continuing his discussion of the Treaty, Korovszky then explained that it was "not merely a defensive agreement, just as the most recent Soviet initiatives were not simply disarmament proposals, but presented a comprehensive programme for the reduction of international tensions". In his presentation, he also emphasised that the signing of the Treaty "serves to advance the cause of peace, so that the grim clouds that hang over the heads of hundreds of millions of people might be banished once and for all". The Soviet leadership's proposal "contains many new elements regarding the issue of disarmament, and in several points actually places the question of disarmament before the western powers in a framework broader than any hitherto, bringing some of the most controversial questions in international politics into close connection with each other. This is the decisively new feature in the proposal, and it is this characteristic which lends it gigantic significance".⁴

In radio news summaries there were accounts of how the news of the signing of the Warsaw Treaty was being followed with great interest in practically every town

⁴ History Week, May 18, 1955. Media support and trusteeship foundation archive. Programme files. Broadcast May 18, 1955, 17:10–17:25



and city of Hungary. In the May 21, 1955, edition of “The News” listeners were informed that *“in hundreds and thousands of spontaneous meetings the people of Hungary have spoken out in favour of this creative peace”*. They were talking about the Treaty *“in the oil fields of the Zala, the paprika fields of Szeged, on the construction sites of Kazincbarcika, and the smallholdings of the Nyírség — everywhere where with our daily work we strengthen our homeland. The masses in their millions have spoken, and their word gives strength to the friends of peace, and strikes fear into the heart of the enemy”*. In the course of these meetings, *“the leading country of this great camp of peace and progress, the Soviet Union, and its invincible Red Army, which, as a comrade-in-arms of the armed forces of the democratic countries, stands guard over our new factories and our fields and farms”*.

According to the reports, following the meetings people “joyfully and confidently” returned to work so that “the camp of peace might prosper yet further”. The news programme broadcast detailed reports containing the opinions and resolutions of workers, as for example, in the case of the Tatabánya Cement Works. The workers participating in the meeting there *“resolved that in order to strengthen their homeland, Hungary, they would produce 9,000 tonnes of clinker-bricks, 10,000 tonnes of cement, and 2,300 tonnes of lime above and beyond the requirements of the Plan”*. They also aim to save 4,000 tonnes of coal alongside that which had already been decided on.

The workers of the Zala oilfields also “welcomed the Warsaw Treaty”. In the meeting of the Petroleum Industry Enterprise, the question of *“what the unity of the peace-loving nations means to our people”* was discussed, as was the issue of *“how the western imperialists robbed our country of one of its most valuable natural resources, its oil, in order to further their warlike aims”*. They also reported how *“with the help of Soviet experts Hungarian oil production has developed beyond all previous levels”*. The workers of the enterprise welcomed the Treaty “with joy and trust”, pledging that they would *“make every effort to strengthen the democratic countries with even higher production”*. In the fields of the Táncsics Collective Farm in Szeged *“the decision of the City Council was discussed”* in the work-break, the Collective Farm’s Party Secretary *“made the provisions of the Warsaw Treaty known”*, and the workers gave their opinions.

A member of the market-garden brigade, Mrs. L. Márkus, emphasised that *“the agreement affects the fate of all of us — it will defend our land and our harvest [...] and it lends new strength to our work — now our task is to strengthen the Pact. Our brigade will therefore ensure more products for the workers in the cities”*. In Kazincbarcika on April 4, the young workers of the Machine Factory *“working at the turbines indeed unanimously declared that they will back the Warsaw decision with more and better work”*. At the Red Star Sóstóhegy collective farm, they also were *“preparing with ever-better work”*. The collective’s workers resolved that they would *“spray their 80 hold (1 hold = 1,42 acres, 0.57 hectares) of grapevine in two days, while in place of the planned four days, the cultivation brigade will hoe the carrots in two days”*.

The workers of the Hungarian Metal Works *“unanimously approve the decisions of the Warsaw conference”*. At a spontaneous meeting, the secretary of the Party’s basic organisation, Gyula Csizmár, read out the agreement’s clauses, making the point that every clause of the Treaty *“defends and strengthens the cause of peace”*. One of the workers from the factory, Ferenc Ditmayer, said in his speech that the Warsaw Treaty *“raises a barrier against the war mongers’ aggressive efforts and guarantees the countries of the world peace and the happiness of their peoples”*. It was therefore, he continued, *“in*



the interests of all of us to stand up heart and soul for the Treaty". Another contributor to the meeting, Ferenc Villányi, among other things emphasised that the document guarantees *"the uninterrupted progress of socialist construction, which it was now necessary for every Hungarian worker to back with yet better work and heightened militancy"*.

This series of reports closed with the achievements of the Pécs miners, who in the name of the Treaty 'on Saturday, May 21, held a Productivity Day'. The first shift of the Vasas Mine District over fulfilled their planned first shift plan by 111.1%. The Pécs Coalmining Trust's workers achieved 101.8%, bringing to the surface *"the thousandth tonne of coal over and above the present month's plan"*.⁵ On May 24, 1955, another news programme contained accounts of opinions concerning the signing of the Warsaw Treaty. In the introduction it was said that *"every day, from every part of the country, from factories, plants, and villages, come reports of how the working millions trustingly approve the decisions of the Warsaw conference"*.

The report series began with events in Eger. *"In more than a hundred spontaneous meetings,"* the workers of the plants and enterprises *"discussed the decisions of the Warsaw conference"*. Similarly, the provisions of the Treaty were discussed at "every single" state and collective farm. At an after-work meeting of the workers of the Kapsvár Machine Station, the director István Kiss made the results of the Warsaw negotiations known. In his speech, one of the plant's metal-turners, János Mészáros suggested that they send a telegram in the name of the workers to the country's Peace Council in which they *"express their total agreement with the contents of the Treaty and in their work they accept the duties that fall to their lot"*. Other speakers also committed themselves to better work as the best way of supporting the Pact.

"The Treaty signed in Warsaw has been accepted with approval and trust" in the enterprises of Bács County. So it was in the Kinizsi canning plant in Kecskemét, in the engineering plants, and in the shoe factory. Meetings were also organised on the county's collective farms, where speakers stressed that the *"Treaty defends our country's peace and security"*. Teachers discussed the developments in foreign affairs too, as in Székesfehérvár, where, at the Blanka Teleki Girls' High School Gábor Fekecs said the following: *"The agreement between the eight countries is of immeasurable importance, as it advances the life of our people, and safeguards their happiness, given that every clause of it strengthens the defence of peace. Naturally, therefore, we teachers also welcome it with joy and trust..."* Interpreting the opinions of his colleagues, János Rácz of the Attila József High School stressed that *"the Soviet people is consequently pursuing the policy of peace"*, and every Hungarian had an interest in this. *"The camp of peace and progress, under the leadership of the Soviet Union, is doing all it can to ensure that controversial international questions should be resolved on the road of negotiations, and to block the imperialists' machinations, the outbreak of a new war."* The final report on the programme was from the Lovasberény Mezőföldi State Forestry Commission meeting, at which contributors said that the Treaty 'lends greater confidence and impetus to their work'. The call of the Kiskunság State Forestry Commission to 'broaden competitiveness in their work, and increase productivity, in the interests of reducing overheads was accepted'.⁶

5 The News, May 21, 1955, 17:20, in the Hungarian National Archive (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára; further only MNL OL), XXVI-A-14-b box 282.

6 The News, May 24, 1955, 18:25, MNL OL, XXVI-A-14-b box 282.



In its “Ten Minutes’ Foreign Affairs” evening programme of May 25, 1955, the Radio reported that the National Assembly had “solemnly approved and passed into law” the Warsaw Treaty. *“The whole people has made treaty based on friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance its own, seeing it as an important proof of our independence. Its solemn passage into law, its presence in the statute book, is an expression of our people’s unity of will”*. In the programme there was a brief summary of the “celebratory” tone of the contributions in Parliament, which reflected *“the manifestation of the representatives’ deep sense of responsibility”*, which proved *“what an important event in the history of our country the Warsaw Treaty’s passage into law is”*. Through the Treaty, Hungary had *“become an organic part of a collective defence pact which will raise a wall of steel blocking the path of German militarism which once again is threatening Europe”*. The Warsaw Pact *“defends our country and the security of our homes with the strength of the socialist camp of 900 million people. At the same time, however, it is our duty to defend the peace of our whole continent with our strength”*. The passage into law of the Treaty *“thus means both the strengthening of our national and personal security and an increase in our responsibility for the fate of all the people of Europe”*.

In the broadcast the one of the important foreign policy aspects of the Treaty was emphasised, namely *“that it brings us closer to a peaceful solution of the German question”*. The major obstacle on the road to such a solution was *“the fact that the western powers are determinedly in favour of German rearmament. The direction of the Warsaw negotiations was in direct opposition to this”*. Otto Grotewohl, Prime Minister of the GDR, speaking in his capacity as one of the signatories of the document, stated that *“in the view of the government of the GDR this Treaty gives a great filip to the German people in their efforts for the peaceful and democratic reunification of their country”*.⁷ This view was greeted with *“complete understanding”* by the countries taking part in the meeting, as was the notion that *“the government of the GDR proceeds from the fundamental belief that a newly reunited Germany would not be bound by the various treaty obligations to which one or the other side committed itself prior to reunification. And it is the Warsaw Treaty which has opened up this prospect of a reunited Germany...”*⁸

Following the ratification of the Treaty, the news programmes gave accounts of its reception in Hungary. On the evening edition of “News” of May 26, 1955, there was an account of the *“great enthusiasm, approval, and joy”* with which the passage into law of the Treaty was received at meetings in various towns and villages.

In the detailed reports, the case of Szabolcs County received particular attention. There, as elsewhere also, *“thousands of workers were able to follow the course of the proceedings in Parliament at public radio broadcasts”* as the Treaty was ratified, as also in Újfehértó, where *“radios were set up in five public places, at each of which some 80–100 workers assembled to listen to the broadcasts”*. In Laskod following the broadcast, *“the*

7 The repeated raising of the question of reunification demonstrates that the GDR leadership was unwilling to recognise the facts of West Germany’s membership of NATO and its regaining of its sovereignty. Similar announcements were also made by West Germany as well. The focus point of the antagonisms was once again Berlin. See F. FISCHER, *A két-pólusú világ 1945–1989*, Budapest 2005, pp. 133–143.

8 Ten Minutes Foreign Affairs, May 25, 1955. Archive, Programme Files, broadcast May 25, 1955, 22:15–22:25.



workers stayed on for some time discussing the significance of the Treaty”, expressing their view that “the people of the villages regard this as their own matter, as they know that the Pact means that we are not left to face the world alone, but are part of the 900 million-strong Camp of peace-loving nations”. In Nyírtelek the members of the New Life Collective Farm also listened to the radio broadcast together, and János Nagy then expressed the view that “we have now become stronger, and we have taken a great step towards stopping the imperialists’ warmongering”. He further expressed the belief that “the Treaty is a guarantee that we will defend the fruits of our constructive work from external attack with our united strength, and this in itself lends yet further strength and security to our continuing work”.

In the community of Székely, the Communist Party’s youth organisation, the Federation of Working Youth, also organised communal radio listening sessions for the members of the Collective Farm and the individual farmers as well, at which FWY secretary Ferenc Jakab “explained” the significance of the Treaty, emphasising that “now we must demonstrate our commitment to the Treaty by finishing our work even faster”.

From Kaposvár came the news that the meetings called in the enterprises of the town had greeted the passage into law of the Treaty. At one of the mills, one of the spinning machine operators, Mrs. Gy. Móricz, said that the Treaty “is the guarantee that we will defend the fruits of our peaceful, creative work”. Lajos Negyedés, mechanic, said that he “would like to demonstrate his total approval of the Party and Government’s peace policy with yet better work”, while the workers of the mill unanimously declared that ‘with continuing quality work’ their “desire for peace, as well as winning the title of high-achieving factory for the third time”.

The coming in to force of the Treaty also “found an enthusiastic echo” in Debrecen. In the Tobacco Exchange (the centre to which the producers brought their tobacco), and in the State Department Store, the workers “promised that they will demonstrate their readiness to act in support of the Treaty with better production and stronger work discipline”.⁹

Following the passage into law of the Treaty in Hungary, the Radio’s “Ten Minutes Foreign Affairs” broadcast of May 26, 1955, evaluated the impact of the creation of the Pact in the West and its importance in foreign affairs. “There are western leaders who are notoriously not willing to pay attention to the facts, who are not interested in events, in the actual situation, but only in their own imagined version of these, and who always sing the same old song. The most reactionary western papers at first remained almost totally silent about the nature of the Warsaw Treaty, and kept quiet about the nature of the decisions taken. Now they seek other means, seeking to falsify the essence of the Treaty and maliciously misconstrue it. The western media has announced that an ‘eastern version of the Atlantic Bloc’ has been formed in Warsaw, and that with this Europe has now been truly and finally divided. The UPI press agency has characterised the Warsaw Pact as some kind of ‘closed shop’. [...] So, the falsifiers are hard at work.” However, the Warsaw Treaty could be read in quite a different way: “[...] in contrast to the allegation of a ‘divided Europe’, the truth is that the Treaty advances the creation of a collective European peace.”

Furthermore, the Warsaw Pact “radically differs from the closed, aggressive, military bloc of the imperialists, inasmuch as independent of its social and state forms, any country

9 The News, May 26, 1955, 19:35. MNL OL, XXVI-A-14-b box 282.

which desires peace and security might join”. The participants in the Warsaw Conference announced that they would “continue to fight for Germany’s national unity in the new circumstances”.

The programme went on to state that the Treaty did “not conflict with existing international treaties; quite the opposite, [...] it conforms to the fundamental tenets of the United Nations, and could serve as a model for other regional agreements in the interests of peace. And as far as European collective security is concerned, this is the guiding principle of the eight participating countries assembled in Warsaw”. In the introduction to the Treaty it was stated that “the participants are striving for a system of collective security with the co-operation of all European states”. The Treaty also contained the provision that “inasmuch as such a system is created, the Warsaw Treaty will therewith cease to be valid”.

Returning to the theme of imperialism, it was stated that “the Treaty does not seek to replace a general agreement on European security but to advance it”. The Polish Prime Minister, Józef Cyrankiewicz also picked up this theme in his speech. “With the signing of the Treaty we do not by any means give up on our efforts towards the creation of European collective security, but just the opposite — it is our firm conviction that life itself will pave the way for the creation of this.”

The makers of the programme sought in every way possible to emphasise the point that “any potential aggressor will find themselves facing the united strength of the peace-loving countries, and will think not once or twice, but ten times before they give the signal for the creation of any plan of attack. Following the signing of the Warsaw Treaty, in the circle of the western powers leaders” they must surely see clearly that all kinds of strong-arm policies are doomed to failure, and that in the place of threats only discussions based on honest intentions can lead to agreement.¹⁰

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At the time of the political changes in Eastern Europe, 1989–1991, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were the countries that most strongly urged the termination of the Warsaw Pact. In a decision of January 16, 1991, the Czechoslovakian parliament called upon the government to speed up the negotiations concerning the winding up of the military organisation of the Warsaw Pact and the country’s renunciation of the Treaty. On March 31, 1991, the members of the Warsaw Pact declared that the provisions of the Treaty concerning military co-operation no longer pertained to them, and on February 25 signed a joint declaration that the Pact’s military organisations, institutions, and bodies were thereby wound up. On July 1, 1991, the alliance that had hold together the socialist countries for 36 years came officially to an end.¹¹

Irén Simándi | Kodolányi János University, Székesfehérvár Fürdő u. 1, 8000 Székesfehérvár, Hungary, simandiiren@upcmail.hu

10 Ten Minutes Foreign Affairs, Warsaw and European peace, May 26, 1955. Archive, Programme Files, broadcast May 26, 1955, 23:00–23:10.

11 Tamás M Tarján, March 31, 1991 — The cease of the Warsaw Pact’s military organisation. http://www.rubicon.hu/magyar/oldalak/1991_marcius_31_megszunik_a_varsoi_szerzodes_katonai_szervezete/, [cit. 2015–01–04].

