

Document 1.
Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes from the CPSU Politburo Meeting
[About the Future of Comecon].
March 10, 1988.



**Meeting of the CPSU Politburo
[About the Future of Comecon]**

March 10, 1988

Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes

Gorbachev: The HPR [Hungarian People's Republic] and the PPR [Polish People's Republic] have a volume of differentiated trade with the West three times as large as we have. We look at them askance when they walk away toward the West, but we cannot replace [Western goods] with anything. In Comecon we almost have no trade. Only primitive exchange. The essence is in oil [from the Soviet Union]. And our representatives feel no need to trade with them. And they do not feel it either. In the European Union there is a market, but not in Comecon. They [Eastern Europeans] even sell us food for currency.

Our assistance [programs to Eastern Europe] alone take 41 billion [rubles] annually from our budget. Cuba takes 27 billion. In relations with Comecon we must take care, first of all, of our own people. It has become excessively hard for us to conduct business as we have been doing for the last decades. The program [of socialist integration] is dead...

For instance, Poland, [First Secretary Eduard] Gierek. What was it all based on? On the credits from the West and on our cheap fuel. The same is [true] with Hungary. There are specific features in Yugoslavia. But even Yugoslavia is on the brink of collapse. We should draw lessons from all this.

What is our approach? Our priority is the political stability of the socialist countries. This is our vital interest, including the perspective of our security.

... We need the goods from socialist countries. And we bear our responsibility for [the future of] socialism. In an economic sense socialism has not passed the practical test. Therefore we should hang on. Although the situation is gripping us at the throat [*dushit*]. This is the first thing we should keep in mind. We cannot isolate ourselves from Comecon. But what is to be done? The main objective in our approach is what we have been trying to achieve today – to accelerate [*nazhimat na*] the scientific-technical revolution, development of machine-building interests, technological reconstruction. This will liberate [the socialist camp] from the purchase of technologies [from the West]. Consequently, this will free up hard currency...

We should be candid with Comecon and tell them: should we become integrated or not? And they must make up their mind, because we cannot forever remain a provider of cheap resources for you. If they tell us "no," then our hands are free...

Source: Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev. The Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, Fund 2, Opis 1

Translated by Vladislav Zubok
The National Security Archive



Document 2.

The First Meeting between Károly Grósz and Mihail Gorbachev, Moscow.
July 8, 1988.



**Record of Main Content of Mikhail S. Gorbachev's Conversation
with Károly Grósz (Hungary)**

July 8, 1988

After mutual greetings Károly Grósz asks: did you manage to get some rest after the Conference? Comrade Gorbachev jokes: Oh, we will have some rest after we complete our Perestroika!

M. S. Gorbachev: At our Conference we clearly heard the theme of strengthening of the party role as a result of the reform of the political system that we are planning to undertake. When we felt that we had a full agreement on this main issue, then, the differences in opinions notwithstanding, we did not doubt the success. The Conference was really successful; at least we cannot recall anything like this in our lifetime. We have received a powerful support, moral and political approval of our strategic intentions.

K. Grósz: Our television gave extensive coverage to the work of your Conference, and I think it was able to reflect the atmosphere of optimism and involvement that was present in the halls.

M. S. Gorbachev: Recently we followed your Conference very closely as well. It was a big event. In some aspects, we borrowed from your experience, but not in everything. We specifically discussed what we should do with cadres. Initially, we were thinking about changes, but later, when we realized that we were approaching the reform of the political system, we came to the conclusion that personnel changes now could only deflect from this important business. And other things too. We went through the first stages of Perestroika with this particular composition of the Central Committee; we have approved the Theses with these people. Therefore, although we feel a certain lagging behind the situation on the part of some of our comrades, we do not have any grounds for mistrust. And this approach has proved itself right.

We studied your documents carefully, compared them with our documents – in a way as if checking ourselves. Of course, the situation in our country is very different from yours, there are many special features, but there are many similarities as well – in the spirit, on our theoretical views. In other words, we have everything for working together. At the same time we understand that every fraternal party has its own problems, and that they need to resolve them. It is a time of breakthroughs.

I am welcoming you in your role as the leader of fraternal Hungary, and I would like to emphasize that our leadership is in solidarity with your actions, in particular, we received the changes in the composition of the Central Committee of the HSWP with understanding. Your actions reflect the pluralism of opinions and interests of the society. Of course, working in such a situation is not easy, but to a large extent it contributes to your victory, because you have an opportunity to compare different views and to find the best decisions.

Recently I read that the American leadership gave high marks to comrade Grósz, but believed that there was an opportunity, which has to be exploited, because the new Hungarian government would try to find a way out of the current difficulties, and they would not be able to do it without the United States. The Soviet Union itself is in the process of reconstruction and, allegedly, it does not have time for the allies. Overall, they are watching us very closely and they would like to exploit the current moment in order to

strengthen their influence. But look at this interesting dialectic: we are renewing ourselves, and by doing this we are not growing weaker but, to the contrary, strengthening our role, our influence on the world events.

I have some information that might be interesting for you. Ceausescu asked us to urgently receive Secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP comrade Stoyan or to send somebody to Bucharest. The goal is to present new Romanian proposals regarding, as they say, democratization of the Warsaw Treaty. We will think what we should do. In general, Ceausescu believes that you and me somehow step back from socialism.

V. A. Medvedev: The main danger is on the right . . .

M. S. Gorbachev: Yes, that is a surprising thing. We, for example, are looking for new approaches, but everything is still clear, there are positive and negative things. We hear sharp criticism immediately – we are not going in the right direction, we are violating something.

One can understand why some people do not like what we are doing now. For example, what is the democracy which is unfolding here now all about? What if the Romanian people would want it too and tomorrow would present serious claims to the Romanian leadership.

Turning to the subject of the Conference, I would like to say that my optimism has grown. Perestroika is developing because of glasnost, because of the economic reform, and now also because of the reform of the political system, the purpose of which is to include the people in the governing of the country. People are coming to us on their own. The most vulnerable spot now is the solution of practical questions, first of all, the food problems, the deficit of consumer goods. And, in general, there are some signs of progress in the economy. If you do not count the alcohol, then this five-year period produced significantly higher increases in production than the last five-year period.

We set ourselves a goal for the twelfth five-year period to concentrate our attention on the structural issues – primarily on the machine construction, machine-tool construction, and to push ahead in the electronics, and this time not in numbers, but in quality. We seriously took up our economy, as nobody has done for a very long time. We have tremendous reserves. But we are too slow in overcoming indifference, many people are still satisfied with equalizing: they are saying that we prefer to live more modestly, than to work harder.

To the question of resources. The machine construction industry now works practically in one shift. Therefore, just by establishing some order we can move ahead significantly. And if our new economic mechanism starts to work! We feel that people's trust is growing. But still, we made some mistakes in propaganda; we created extreme expectations, hopes that everything would improve immediately. Now I repeat almost in every speech: Perestroika is not a miracle, it does not mean that we thought of something today, the went to bed, and tomorrow everything is all ready! No, we need intensive and serious work.

The people are gradually getting involved in our work, they are waking up. But it is more difficult for the party, for our personnel, to work in the conditions of democracy. We are observing that many party organizations are lagging behind the general process of Perestroika.

Of course, we have a lot of problems; the situation is not simple. We are very concerned about the conflict over Nagorny Karabakh. Lenin himself had looked at it, and he entrusted it to Chicherin. Those who were in charge of internal affairs apparently were

not capable to deal with that one – they did not have enough sensitivity. Dzerzhinsky and Kirov somehow mediated the issue, but it would emerge again and again, and now in the conditions of *glasnost*, it flared up and is burning with a new force. How are we going to solve it? We told our Armenian and Azerbaijan comrades: negotiate with each other, we will approve whatever decisions you make! But they cannot do it, they are saying: let Moscow decide. Then we proposed – let us not touch the borders, but let us try to solve the concrete social and economic problems. But the Armenian side does not trust Azerbaijan. Stepanokert is on fire, there are strikes in Armenia, and they are trying to block the airport. In other words – real trouble. Yesterday I had a long conversation with the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia, but so far they cannot propose anything. Here is the nationalities issue – maybe the most difficult of all. We are looking at it in depth now; within the framework of the reform of the political system we will try to resolve the problems that emerged in this respect, to strengthen the rights of the Republics, of the Autonomies. Look at what is happening in Estonia, they cannot name a price for a movie ticket on their own. Is this centralization gone beyond all rational limits?

These questions were also discussed at the Conference. In general, it involved strong emotions, and sharp polemics. But there is no other way; we have to expand our democracy. These are probably the main things that I wanted to say about our internal problems. Our country is enormous, and it gives us a basis to rely on. Its potential. You can take the example of defense. I can tell you as a friend that the best forces, specialists, industrial apparatus are employed in this sphere, and here we are second to none. But here too we need a scientific approach. Sometimes it could look as if we were going to wage a war against the whole world – but parity does not require absolute equality in all the parameters. What does strategic parity mean? It is our unacceptable response to a possible enemy. And for this, one does not have to have an equal number of weapons. You probably noticed the short phrase in the report on this issue. The tasks of defense should be solved, first of all, by the improvement of quality.

We should devote more thinking to solving the day-to-day problems of our people. We have to watch, so that the ship of Perestroika is not overloaded. And in order to do this, we could only load so much at every stage, so that it does not lose its balance. This, in my opinion, is the general rule of politics. Yeltsin, for example, is just a revolutionary phrase; he is a symbol of a refusal to deal with real life. He is saying that we should act faster, but it is not easy for people to understand what it means – many people like his rhetoric. As if we did not want to move faster! But enough – we have burned ourselves, and many times so, during our leaps forward. Strategy and tactics should be balanced.

K. Grósz: Thank you for sharing your interesting ideas with me. I did not want to misuse your time before the Conference. I know that it is not easy for you now, but I decided to visit you for several hours to share my concerns. First of all, I would like to relate to you the best wishes of our Politburo and also of Janos Kadar, with whom I had a conversation on the eve of my departure from Budapest.

* * *

M. S. Gorbachev: In my opinion, you made a good decision regarding him.

K. Grósz: It was not easy. You know, it was him who came up with the initiative of changes in the government. But he started from the assumption that such changes should not have a demonstration character. However, he assessed the situation incorrectly, he did

not take into account that the party members were inclined more . . .

* * *

K. Grósz: We have only one alternative – to reorient our industrial capacities that produce military technology. The problem is that we would have to dissolve a good group of specialist (up to 5 thousand people), whom it would be difficult to put together again later. But we are forced to cut military production by 500 million rubles.

M. S. Gorbachev: Let us agree that we will give instructions to our staff to look at this question, and to report back to the Politburo, and then we will think about it and give you our answer.

K. Grósz: One more question. Last week an Iranian representative asked me . . .

M. S. Gorbachev: Yes, we know, we did not promise anything to them.

K. Grósz: They even sent us a document.

M. S. Gorbachev: This is probably Kaddafi or Syria. I requested the opinion of the Defense Ministry and the Foreign Ministry. They told me that no agreement existed between the USSR and Iran on sales of armaments to that country, and we do not have any plans in that regard. We are not selling weapons to Iran, and we will stick by that line in the future.

K. Grósz: The Iranian Prime Minister asked me if Hungary could take a middleman role upon itself – to buy weapons from you, and to sell them to us.

M. S. Gorbachev: When the shooting in Teheran first began, the Iranians presented their claims to us. But we told them that we were not providing missiles to Iraq. It turned out that the Iraqi improved the missiles that we used to supply them earlier. In general, we are trying to follow a reserved line in relations with Iran. We are trying to keep the Americans from any excesses as well. We abide by the embargo very strictly.

K. Grósz: We supply radio intelligence systems to many countries.

M. S. Gorbachev: Yes, it is your share in the division of labor, as far as I remember.

K. Grósz: Yes, but we are not supplying weapons. I told the Iranian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs that we do not have a right to supply anything without the USSR.

M. S. Gorbachev: Good. We will work on this question. I think that the Iranians are sending us signals in this fashion. In principle, we are against such supplies.

K. Grósz: Another concrete question. A year ago I asked N. I. Ryzhkov for advice and support regarding purchasing an American nuclear power station. Then we were asking you to help to supply the power station with fuel, and comrade Ryzhkov rejected our request. I understood that the USSR could not agree to this, because these are two different systems and the question was removed from the agenda. However, in the period

between 1990 and 1995, we will experience shortages of electric power, and opening of two blocks at the nuclear power station "Paksh", which is being built with the USSR assistance, has been postponed. At the same time, the Americans promised to build their nuclear power station in 36 months, and to take responsibility for the disposal of the waste. By the way, the Yugoslavs some time ago did not discuss this condition with them, and now they have to build storage facilities that will cost them almost half of the cost of the station itself.

M. S. Gorbachev: How much will it cost you?

K. Grósz: 700 million dollars, which they would give us as a loan for 25 years at 6 percent annually. We do not have to pay in the first five years. In other words, the conditions are very beneficial. When I go to the United States, we will discuss this issue. Besides, they are offering to us electronic telephone systems that are covered under the embargo up until 1992. A Canadian firm with American participation produces them. We discussed this question with comrade Antonov, and I think your institutions are also interested. Recently I met a COCOM representative in Budapest. He promised to remove that ban on the supplies of models beginning in 1988. The Czechs are also interested. I would like to propose that we create a joint Soviet-Hungarian venture with Canadian participation.

M. S. Gorbachev: That is interesting. We need to look into that. We will give instructions to our comrades to urgently look into this issue.

V. A. Medvedev: Would the Americans be against our participation?

K. Grósz: This is our problem, and I spoke about it with the COCOM chairman. They will give us the license. We could only produce this production profitably on a big scale.

In conclusion I would like to touch upon three issues of foreign policy. The FRG is trying to make special "love" to us. This can be explained by the historical tradition. My visit to Bonn paved the way. I would appreciate your opinion: how do you evaluate the course of the FRG? I know that Kohl is planing to visit you.

M. S. Gorbachev: We are in favor of influencing the FRG policy through cooperation. FRG – is a large factor in Europe. Developing relations with West Germany would give the Germans more courage in their relations with the United States and France. In terms of their economy, the FRG is a giant, however, in a political sense, it is something completely different. We need to exploit this. West Germany is tied into a knot of many problems. If we work in this direction more actively, we would have more opportunities to oppose Bonn's effort to swallow the GDR, to pressure Poland from their revanchist positions. They need relations with the Soviet Union. Without them, they cannot support their ambitions in Europe. Moreover, now, when Perestroika is unfolding in our country, they naturally want to penetrate the developing Soviet markets. In other words, we should develop our relations with an objective that the FRG became a bigger and bigger factor of stabilization of the situation in Europe, and not otherwise.

We experienced a period of cooling off with them. We had to teach them some lessons. It seems like it has brought some results. Genscher and the Social Democrats carry themselves well. Kohl is sometimes asking for too much. He has just enough ideas for the nearest perspective. Today they began saying that relations with the USSR take up

the central place in their policy. We should try to understand what stands behind it, what kind of interests.

K. Grósz: The West Germans made concrete economic proposals – on instrument-making, machine construction; they are willing to make investments, and they have helped us conclude agreements with the Common Market. I decided not to give them any answers before I learned your opinion.

M. S. Gorbachev: I will inform you immediately after Kohl's visit.

K. Grósz: Some technologies that they produce are more reliable than Japanese technologies . . .

Our relations with Israel are another problem. Each week I get telegrams from Shamir with a request to receive him in Budapest. When Peres visited us "in transit," we told him that we do not see reestablishment of diplomatic relations between our countries expedient at this time. But in this company, I would like to say openly that 20 years ago, when we broke relations with Israel; we did not think everything through to the end. It is more difficult to influence somebody when standing on the side. But of course, we cannot do anything unilaterally; it would be necessary to discuss this question together with our friends. We do not have any special interests, except for the fact that there are quite many Jews who came from Hungary, who now live in Israel, and that we have 30 to 35 thousand tourists from Israel annually.

We sell our consumer goods for 800 million dollars to Arabs, so there is some risk, but they have reacted to our contacts with Israel more calmly than we could have expected.

M. S. Gorbachev: We will look into this question, and recently I made some definite statements on this issue. Of course, Israel has a right to exist and to be secure. At the same time, we are telling them that they should also recognize the same rights of their neighbors, including the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination, and they have to return the occupied Arab territories. The balance of interests is necessary. Therefore, it follows from this that we will not have any difficulties in managing diplomatic relations. But only in a certain context. We are saying – let us begin the process of international settlement, and within the framework of that settlement, we will agree on establishing diplomatic relations. They do not like such linkage, but today the entire world is ready for a conference on the Middle East.

V. A. Medvedev: This would make the situation easier from the Arab angle.

M. S. Gorbachev: Yes, we have a flexible position, and it would be difficult for the Arabs to oppose it. At the same time, we cannot just follow the interests of just Arabs or just Israelis.

K. Grósz: Peres agrees with the idea of the conference, but Shamir categorically rejects it.

M. S. Gorbachev: They said the same to comrade Shevardnadze.

K. Grósz: I would like to consult with you about the situation in Korea. We have active relations with South Korea. We established a trade bureau. They are pressuring us, trying to establish diplomatic relations.

M. S. Gorbachev: We would have to wait with that. The Americans do not intend to leave South Korea and Kim-Il-Sung is very sensitive regarding this—he is afraid that we might take the position of recognizing “two Koreas.” It would be a blow to his entire post-war policy. In this connection, Kim Il-Sung states that he would regard economic contacts with South Korea as an unfriendly action. You would be the first target, but they voiced objections even to us. I have looked into it. It turned out that some trifles got to our country via third countries. As a minimum, you should try to abstain from diplomatic contacts at the level of embassies.

K. Grósz: If Kim Il-Sung is so sensitive, it won't hurt to remind him that during the affair with the downing of the plane, his people, who traveled with fake passports, were sitting in the Korean People's Democratic Republic's Embassy in Budapest for two weeks.

I would like to thank you for such a warm welcome, for giving me so much of your time.

M. S. Gorbachev: It was very interesting and useful for me to learn about everything that you have told me. Tell your comrades that we are ready to strengthen cooperation between the USSR and Hungary in this new stage of our relations, to help each other, to interact, to consult each other. Of course, both of us have our own limits, when we have the desire, but lack capabilities. But this is the situation today—tomorrow it may change. Let us build our relations in a long-term basis.

M. S. Gorbachev invites Károly Grósz to come to the USSR for vacation.

K. Grósz responds that so far his situation is difficult. He hopes to go on vacation in November-December, but no longer than for two weeks.

V. A. Medvedev took part in the conversation.

Recorded by G. Shakhnazarov.

35 copies.

11.VII.88



Document 3.
Shakhnazarov's Preparatory Notes for Gorbachev
for the Meeting of the CPSU Politburo.
October 6, 1988.



**Shakhnazarov's preparatory notes for Gorbachev
for the Meeting of the Politburo
on October 6, 1988**

Mikhail Sergeevich!

May be you will find these thoughts useful.

Today we are discussing the results of our talks with the leaders or prominent figures from a number of socialist countries – K. Phomvikhane, Wo Thi Khong, E. Honecker, N. Ceaucescu, Cirek. Now Zh. Batmunkh is asking for a meeting.

Each country has its unique situation and we would be correct not to approach them across-the-board [“chokhom”]; we are seeking to figure out specifics in each of them and to build our policy on the basis of such an analysis.

At the same time today's exchange and, broadly speaking – everything that we know, all the information we receive, encourages us to take a multi-faceted evaluation of the situation in the socialist commonwealth. With all differences and nuances, there are multiple signs that some similar problems are increasingly plaguing the fraternal countries. The very similarity of symptoms of the disease testifies to the fact that its catalyst [vozbuditel] is not some kind of a malignant germ that has managed to penetrate their lowered defenses, but some factors rooting in the very economic and political model of socialism as it had evolved over here and had been transferred with insignificant modifications to the soil of the countries who had embarked on the path of socialism in the post-war period.

We have already laid bare weaknesses of this model and are beginning to remove them in a systematic way. This is, actually the super-task of *perestroika* – to give socialism a new quality. A number of countries have followed us and began, even ahead of us, the process of deep reforms. Some of them, the GDR, Romania, the KNDR [North Korea] still do not admit its need, but they do it rather for political reasons, because their current political leadership does not want to change anything. In reality all of them need changes, although we do not tell them this publicly to avoid criticism for trying to impose our *perestroika* on our friends.

But the fact is that obvious signs of a crisis require radical reforms everywhere in the socialist world. And subjective factor plays a huge role. For instance, in more than backward Laos Fomvikhan is acting skillfully and there are some good results. But those who stubbornly turn the deaf ear to the call of the time, are driving the malaise ever deeper and aggravate its manifestations in the future.

And this concerns us in a direct way. Although we laid aside our rights of “senior brother” in the socialist world, we cannot renounce the role of a leader, the role that will always objectively will belong to the Soviet Union as the most powerful socialist country, the motherland of the October Revolution. When it came to the crisis in any of them, we had to come to rescue at the cost of huge material, political and even human sacrifices.

We should clearly see, moreover, that in the future any possibility to “put out” crisis situations by military means must be fully excluded. Even the old [pre-Gorbachev] leadership seems to have already realized it, at least with regard to Poland.

Now we must reflect on how we will act if one or even several countries simultaneously will become bankrupts? This is realistic prospect, for some of them are on the brink of monetary insolvency (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Vietnam, Cuba, GDR). Even Czechoslovakia that has so far stayed afloat, now has its external debt rapidly rising.

What shall we do, if social instability that are taking now increasingly threatening character in Hungary will close up [somknetsia] with another round of trouble-making in Poland, demonstrations of "Charter-77" in Czechoslovakia, etc.? in other words, do we have a plan in case of the crisis which might encompass the entire socialist world or a large part of it?

We are worried by this. When we receive from time to time alarmist cables we do what we can, but all this is at best like applying lotion to sores, not a systematic, thoughtful strategy of treatment of the disease, not to mention preventive measures.

It is high time to discuss these issues at the Politburo in the presence of experts. We should not bury our head into the sand like the ostrich, but we should look into the future with open eyes and ask ourselves the sharpest questions:

- Could the socialist countries come out of the pre-crisis situation without Western assistance?
- What price they will have to pay for this assistance?
- To what extent we should encourage such a course of events or to put up with it?
- To what degree we are interested in further presence of Soviet troops on the territory of a number of Allied countries (excluding the GDR)?

We should assign the newly-established International Commission of the CC with a task to prepare materials for this discussion. This is a huge problem, in scope as well as in significance, we should tackle it continuously, but the first exchange should take place already in late December – early January 1989. There will be a working conference of leadership of the commonwealth in Prague in February, and this gives and chance to share with friends some of our conclusions. They are already expecting it, although each of them, of course, sees the situation from "his own angle."

Published in G.Kh. Zhakhnazarov. "Tsena prozreniia" [The price of enlightenment]

*Translation by Vladislav Zubok
The National Security Archive*

Document 4.
Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary
[Gorbachev Transcends the Concept of Class Struggle].
October 28, 1988.



Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary
October 28, 1988

Kohl met one-on-one with Gorbachev (plus me and Teltschik – assistant of the Chancellor). And when I saw this striving at the highest level to speak as one human being to another human being (mutually), I felt physically that we are entering a new world, where class struggle, ideology, and in general polarity and enmity are no longer determinate. And something all-human is taking the upper hand. And then I came to realize how brave and far-sighted M.S. [Gorbachev] is. He declared a new thinking “without any theoretical preparation” and began to act according to common sense. His ideas are: freedom of choice, mutual respect of each others' values, balance of interests, renunciation of force in politics, all-European house, liquidation of nuclear armaments, etc., etc. All this, each by itself, is not original or new. What is new, is that a person who came out of Soviet Marxist-Leninism, Soviet society conditioned from top to bottom by Stalinism – when he came the head of the state, began to carry out these ideas with all earnestness and sincerity. No wonder, that the world is stunned and full of admiration. And our public still cannot appreciate that he has already transferred all of them from one state to another...

*From Anatoly Chernyaev. “1991. The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR”
(Moscow: TERRA, 1997)*

*Translated by Vladislav Zubok
National Security Archive*



Document 5.

Anatoly Chernayev's Notes from the CPSU Politburo Session
[Gorbachev's Report on the Talks with the Trilateral Commission
(Kissinger, Giscard d'Estaing, Nakasone) –
Hungary's Situation, Kissinger's Reference to a
Possible Soviet-American Condominium in Europe].

January 21, 1989.



Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes from the CPSU Politburo Session
January 21, 1989

Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Central Committee

Gorbachev is speaking about the Trilateral Commission, with which he met (Kissinger, Giscard d'Estaing, Nakasone). It is interested in everything that is going on, especially in our country. It is working on all issues of European world policy. I would emphasize two issues.

First is how you – meaning we, the Soviet Union – are going to integrate into the world economy? These issues are considered in the Trilateral Commission. If you are going to integrate, we should be ready for it – they said to me.

Giscard told me directly that for us (the USSR) this problem would be extremely difficult, but for them also.

Second issue. They are coming to the conclusion that the biggest fights of *perestroika* are still ahead of us. And in the international sphere the main problems for us will emerge in the Third World. They think that the West "let the Third World live," and the Third World, in turn, "let the West live". But how are we going to deal with the Third World? They believe that in 10-20 years we all will have to deal with a federation of states named Europe.

Kisa [Kissinger – Translator] just shrugged at this statement by Giscard, and asked me a direct question: How are you going to react if Eastern Europe wants to join the EC? It is not an accident that they asked me about it. They know that our friends are already knocking on the door. And we should also look at what processes are going on there now – the economic and the political – and where are they drifting.

What is going on in Hungary, for example? An opposition party led by [Miklos] Nemeth has emerged there. Hungary is on the eve of a serious choice. Of course, it will be different. And I think that every country should have, and has, its own face. And we will continue to be friends, because the socialist basis will be preserved in all of them. The roads of our development will be very diverse, while we will preserve our commonality. We need a mechanism that would ensure our mutual understanding and interaction. There will be a lot of political, economic, and military – political questions. We should consider them in the Central Committee's Commission on Eastern Europe. We should undertake situational analysis with scholars. For example, how would we react if Hungary was leaving for the EC? Comrades, we are on the eve of very serious things. Because we cannot give them more than we are giving them now. And they need new technologies. If we do not deal with that, there will be a split, and they will run away.

And then there is the question of what we should present to the working groups of the leaders of the socialist countries. By the way, let the Commission give us a substantiated answer whether we need this meeting at all. Before it, we should work this out what can we give to our friends, and compare it with what the West can give them.

The answer to this question, I am sure, lies with our *perestroika*, with its success. And we should try to involve our friends, to get them interested in our economic reforms. Let Yakovlev, with scholars, look at it. We are facing a serious problem there.

The peoples of those countries will ask: what about the CPSU, what kind of leash will it use to keep our countries in? They simply do not know that if they pulled this leash

stronger, it would break.

It is time to transfer our relations to the forms that we practice in our relationship with China, but we can get to such forms only via the market, and, of course, via technological and scientific developments in our own country.

In that case, we would break the old rule that we keep them attached to us only by means of energy resources.

At the same time, we cannot just tell them that we would cut the deliveries. That would be a betrayal.

Kisa hinted at the idea of a USSR-USA condominium over Europe. He was hinting that Japan, Germany, Spain, and South Korea were on the rise, and so, let us make an agreement so that the "Europeans do not misbehave."

We should work on this range of issues also, but in such a way that it would not leak, because in Europe they are most afraid of that what they understand the Reykjavik summit to mean. And if you remember, in Reykjavik they saw an effort at conspiracy between the USSR and the USA over Europe.

My impression from the meeting with the Trilateral Commission is the following: they understood in the West that the world needs a peaceful breathing spell – from the arms race, from the nuclear psychosis as much as we need it. However, we need to know it all in detail in order not to make mistakes. They want to channel the processes in such a way as to limit as much as possible our influence on the world situation, they are trying to seize the initiative from us, present criteria of trust as tests: if the Soviet Union would not want to agree to something, we would act in a way to gain more points.

That is why we have to keep the initiative. This is our main plus.

Document 6.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee
[Debate on Imre Pozsgay's Declaration]. (Excerpts).
January 31, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee

January 31, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpt.)

[...]

Imre Pozsgay: As regards the specific issue: the subcommittee, headed by Iván T. Berend, had a debate Friday morning, on the basis of a 102-page case study.

I had no chance to read the document before the debate, because it has just been given to me. All the same, let me point out only one aspect of the debate, namely that six members of the Central Committee were present, and the leaders of two party institutions. There was no argument about the incriminated assessment; on the contrary, the conclusion was drawn that a minimal public consensus – I merely interpret this, as I have no right to borrow others' words –, so, a minimal public consensus does not harm the identity of the party, nor does it shatter the personal identity of those who tied their lives, career and behaviour specifically with this struggle. None the less, it can lead to social reconciliation and national consensus in certain bitter and still all too distressing issues, such as the whole situation since 1948-49, and especially its peak – or ebb, as others believe – the crisis and tragedy of 1956. The committee unanimously agreed in this issue. And finally we also agreed that this document, even before it is discussed by the Central Committee, has to be publicised, so that a scientific opinion, supported by wide masses of the party, could be used for creating a political direction. These were the fundamentals and basic motives of the committee. In a way it is an answer to the numerous questions, in fact asked from many sides, why not the Central Committee discussed the issue first. According to an earlier procedure, indeed it would have been the way of handling such questions. However, I am convinced that this procedure is the very reason why the party often hoisted with its own petard, when it came to discussing similar issues. As regards further connections and problems that the question raise:

Certainly, or rather undoubtedly the ensuing political effects – even if it has the minimal consensus I have just referred to -- is expected to become a bone of contention within the party, something that divides people and induces political polemics, although it will not hurt even those who have won the Honour for the Socialist Homeland for their sacrifices. The committee was aware of this fact from the very beginning, knowing that we cannot get round this debate, that it has to happen, so in a way the cup of sorrows has to be taken.

[...]

Mihály Jassó: The vast majority is dumbfounded, and not because they have heard the results of an academic research from the Historical Subcommittee, but because they feel that a pillar of the institutionalised political system is about to be uprooted. Party members feel that our political system is somehow based on 1956. And now they have the impression that this foundation is being removed from underneath. They think that this slice of the past – 1956 – has to be assessed with subtle differentiation. But now this assessment shows no sign of differentiation either. Figuratively speaking, they used to make a fine cabinet with an axe, and now they are trying to do the same. I don't intend to be too poetic but I'm coming from an office where I got phone calls and letters today, asking how we are going to call the monument on Köztársaság Square? Who sacrificed

their lives there? Defenders of the people's power? Resistance fighters of the people's uprising, or their opponents? It is all confused. How shall we call the Mező Imre Street? And so on. Because perhaps it was a people's uprising that started the whole thing but it lead to something else. Given that, we need at least a subtle, differentiated assessment of the whole period. The present one is not differentiated at all. This is another extreme, which sets people wide apart. If we start a debate on the issue, which is now naturally unavoidable, I think it is only good for separating some of the party membership. It is a crude simplification but we segregate party members into two groups on the basis of this: there would be "pro uprising" and "pro counter-revolution" members. Obviously I refer to the underlying political content. Perhaps we cannot avoid the debate, but I am not sure that it has to be induced so radically at once.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: The problem is greater, and we have to widen its scope. Is 1956 really the foundation of the Hungarian communist movement? If 1956 is our foundation, I will not expect the movement to hold out very long, because it is a weak foundation indeed. Our decisions and historical assessment of 1956 were driven by the spirit of the time and not without controversies. While things were going smoothly, people tolerated all this, but when times are hard, the same people seem discontent with what they tolerated before. Therefore we should not consider 1956 as a foundation. 1956 was a tragic event, a moment that manifested the prevailing crisis, and today we have to conclude that in fact 1956 signified a more serious crisis than we thought at the time, or even in 1957. We belittled the problem, but now we all agree – and I think there is a consensus about it in the party – that it was the materialisation of a historical mistake. [...] Consequently, I have to point out that it would be a serious mistake – especially for the future of the party – to tie our policy to the 1956 bandwagon.

We have to conclude, having read the document – I have read the document and the material of the Committee debate as well –, that the declaration of Pozsgay and the exposé of the Committee show a unanimous approach. They are in accord. Which does not justify that the declaration had to be publicised this way. I am still on the opinion that it was disadvantageous, hasty and inaccurate. I hold on to my opinion, even though there is no fundamental controversy between the standpoint of the Committee and that of Pozsgay.

As to whether it was a "people's uprising" or "counter-revolution", my opinion is that a definition without controversy is impossible in this issue. Personally I think that it was a people's uprising; our declaration in December 1956 acknowledged it in the first paragraph, labelling it as the rightful discontent of the people.

I do maintain, though, that hostile enemies gradually joined in, and they could have turned the wheel of history backwards, so the danger of counter-revolution was imminent. As to our opinion on 1956, I argue against the farfetched criticism of Imre Nagyⁱ and his circle, and the significance of revisionism. ... I declare it with communist honesty, it was a mistake. It is not true that the revisionist group of Imre Nagy had such a vital role in the events ... At that time, I myself have accepted this declaration. However, we get smarter, and now we see what went on. We now realise that the mistakes were more serious. We realise that it was wrong to think that between 1953 and 1956 Rákosiⁱⁱ was a dime and Imre Nagy was a dozen, so to speak. In that debate, well, Imre Nagy was right. It is a matter of honesty, if someone thinks it over and believes that it is so, one should speak out all right. And I do speak out. Imre Nagy was not a counter-revolutionary, he was not. If a

party ever, with their own... One just has to read his speeches. Where the hell do we find counter-revolutionary ideas with Imre Nagy? Nowhere, absolutely nowhere! And these are matters of honour. He was rather a sectarian. If he was still among us now unchanged, he would be more of a Stalinist. His role in the 1956 events remains debatable, it cannot be clarified. The Soviets were mocking around, which we swept under the carpet. Even today we cannot see the truth. I already know, however, that the Soviets had a lion's share in the decision. János Kádár and the Political Committee of the time took full responsibility, for which I respect them. However, they are far from being the only ones to blame. Their responsibility is without question, because it cannot be accepted either that a decision was made in Moscow and it was executed here. Unfortunately, though, I have to emphasise again that we won't be able to come to terms with the question of 1956. Legally Imre Nagy was culpable, because he breached the law. It is not too moral, at the time when everybody is breaching the law – I was breaching it, and so was János Kádár – the lawbreakers themselves accuse and convict the weaker one on the basis of the sectarian law. These are not righteous things. All the same, those who did not live in that situation are unable to imagine how it was – and this is the dramatic aspect. I think, if we leave it in the focus of political debates, that would result in the serious weakening and value crisis of the communist movement. Consequently, we have to put history right; it can be corrected. Roughly according to the opinion of the Committee, it can be corrected, but let me emphasise that the word "counter-revolution" should not be replaced with a single term, and it has to be decided who makes the correction. I think it is now time for us to try and come to some kind of political consensus. We cannot let the undulations of political life shatter the scarcely forming unity and co-operation of the party and its leadership, so that other players take over while we eventually fall apart. I also mean that Pozsgay should not become the victim of this affair, either. Yet Pozsgay should show more discipline and more mutual responsibility as well.

All in all, we should not let ourselves confronted with each other to an extreme. What do I think the possible action to take is? I believe that the Central Committee should be summoned and presented the material of the Committee. The Pozsgay affair should not be presented on its own; it would be an impossible trial that would lead to nothing. I think that the documents of the Subcommittee have to be submitted for debate, and only then could it be discussed whether it was wise or not, what he did, and what action has to be taken in order to settle the debate. At the same time, principal issues of daily politics should be presented to the Central Committee, such as what should be done now in the question of the single party system and the multiparty system. Things have passed over our heads. I cannot see another option other than we accept the multiparty system. But we need to debate all this. And if we decide against the multiparty system, then that will be our decision, and everybody decides according to his conscience whether he takes the political responsibility for his decision. I do admit sincerely, I would take responsibility for both, even if I do not agree with the decision. It can be done intelligently. Retreat, however, is the worst one can do, it can only lead to our defeat. We have to do it sooner or later, anyway. [...]

All in all, I say that we take seriously the compilation of the Committee, and consider their report worthy of being presented to the Central Committee. We suggest the Central Committee that we publicise the documents of the Committee. We'll see if the Central Committee will accept the suggestion. [...]

In fact, the most serious and sensitive issue of our policy is quite palpable here, namely how we relate to the Kádár era, to the Kádár regime. In my opinion, it would be a mistake for reformers to entirely do away with the Kádár regime. On the other hand, it

would be a mistake to canonise the policy of the Kádár regime and battle to the last man standing in defence of what we have created since 1956. Some in the party have a leaning for the latter, while others are ready to prove and expose the mistakes. Neither of these should be embraced. We have to try to solve the problem with rationale. If relevant circles, or the determining circle of the Central Committee put the issue on the agenda, a consensus is possible. We should start working on activity programs, preparing for the multiparty system. We need these projects for creating a stabilising program that addresses today's conditions, as well as more specific government programs.

[...]

Document 7.

A Memorandum of the International Department of the Central Committee of
the CPSU, to Alexander Yakovlev [Relations with the Countries of
Eastern Europe, Strategic Outlines].

February, 1989.



A Memorandum of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU,
to Alexander Yakovlev (February 1989)

Soviet Union
Communist Party
Central Committee

ON THE STRATEGY OF RELATIONS WITH EUROPEAN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

1. Our relations with socialist countries, including the allies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, entered a difficult, critical, stage. The transition to the principle of equality and mutual responsibility, which began in April 1985, and was affirmed during the Working Meeting in Moscow in 1986, gave us an opportunity to remove many old layers, and to strike out the perceptions of our conservatism. *Perestroika*, the development of democratization, of openness, confirmed the role of the Soviet Union as the leader in the process of Socialist renewal. More and more, we are influencing our friends by our own example, by the political means.

However, having broken the former type of relations, we have not established a new type yet. And the problem is not only that the process of restructuring the interactions between the socialist countries on the basis of "balance of interests," which we proclaimed, is objectively difficult, and, subjectively, it creates an impression in the eyes of our friends, that we are abandoning them, leaving behind the priority character of relations with socialist countries. The problem is that the transition to the "balance of interests" is seriously aggravated by the prolonged crisis of the model of socialism which was developed in its main features in the Soviet Union in Stalin's time, and then transferred to the countries that were liberated by us, or with our decisive participation. Their political system still suffers from a lack of legitimacy, and the stability-oriented socio-economic system is incapable of giving an adequate response to the challenge of the scientific and technological revolution.

The relaxation of tensions, the diminishing of the threat of war, to which the socialist countries contributed in a decisive way, caused deep changes in their national security priorities. The economic factor, the ability of a country to join and to assimilate into the world economy, moved to the top of their priorities, because not a single country can overcome the growing gap on its own, individually, and because the socialist economic integration is clearly in a stalemate, so that if the countries stay with it, they would risk being left out of the world development. This constitutes the main national interest of the majority of the socialist countries right now, and it should be primarily taken into account in our relations with them.

The European socialist countries found themselves in a powerful magnetic field of the economic growth and social well-being of West European states. Against this background, on the one hand, their own achievements grew dim, and on the other hand, the real problems and difficulties that exist in the West, are practically imperceptible. The constant comparing and contrasting of the two worlds, of their ways of life, production, cultures, entered our life thanks to the means of mass communication, and there is no way around it. And we are speaking about the countries in which they still remember the times when they were close or on the same level of development with the West European states.

The influence of this magnetic field will probably grow even stronger with the beginning of functioning of the common European market [in 1992].

As a consequence, in a number of socialist countries, the process of rejection of the existing political institutions, and of the ideological values by the societies, is already underway now. Nonconformism is spreading more and more widely among the youth, and it is moving from a passive, kitchen level, toward a civil and political one.

2. The difficult and transitional character of this stage comes from the situation where the ruling parties cannot rule in the old way any more, and the new "rules of the game" – of managing the group interests that are pouring out, of finding a social consensus – have not been worked out yet. And to the extent that this process is postponed and prolonged, the parties could find themselves in more and more difficult situation.

In the context of general tendencies that are observable in all socialist countries, there are specific features of specific countries, [a fact] which requires a differentiated response from us.

In Poland and Hungary the events develop in the direction of pluralism, toward a creation of coalition, parliamentary forms of governing. In these circumstances, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP), and the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) can count on preserving their positions only in a framework of political alliances. A lot will depend on whether they are able to involve a part of the opposition in a constructive cooperation. Taking into account the fact that a considerable part of the population of Poland is tired of crises, the probability of an evolutionary development here is higher. In Hungary, at the same time, notwithstanding their seemingly better living standards, the situation might unfold in most unexpected ways.

A part of the party activists in both the HSWP, and the PUWP, expressed their willingness to use force in the case of a rapid deterioration of the situation. There is no unity of opinion on all of these issues in the leadership of the HSWP, and the PUWP, therefore, we should expect the rise in factional fighting there.

In Czechoslovakia the tension is rising considerably in the recent times. Here the 1968 syndrome is still present, which interferes with the party's ability to define its position toward *perestroika*, especially in the sphere of democratization and openness.

A significant part of the leadership leans toward employing administrative measures in the struggle against the opposition moods. In general, there is a tendency to begin changes in the economy, and to postpone the reform in the sphere of democratization, and openness until a later stage.

The stabilizing factor is that so far they managed to preserve a relatively high standard of living in the country, although they achieve it with more and more effort now.

In Bulgaria, there is, in essence, a simulation of *perestroika*, which is, to a large extent, a consequence of T. Zhivkov's personal ambitions. The loud declarations about a comprehensive reconsideration of the Marxist-Leninist theory, and about creation of a new model of socialism in principle, lead in practice to endless reorganization, shuffling of personnel, and to the further tightening of the screws. All this discredits the party, socialism, and casts a shadow on our *perestroika*. Nonetheless, T. Zhivkov still controls the situation rather well by employing methods of political manipulation, and by relying on a well-developed administrative apparatus, even though discontent is growing in the party and in the country.

In the GDR a particularly complex situation is developing against the background of seeming well-being. Even though the GDR can be distinguished from other socialist countries by the better state of the economy, and the standard of living, the economic

situation of the country is deteriorating. There is the pressure of debt, and the growing dependence on the FRG. The party leadership, to a large extent under the influence of personal ambitions, is striving to avoid the problems of renewal. In giving critical assessments of the conservatism of the GDR leadership, one has to keep in mind that it has some objective basis. The GDR was founded not on the national, but on the ideological, on the class, basis, and therefore, a rapid transition to democratization, openness, free speech, might be accompanied by special problems in this country.

In Romania, there is still the oppressive atmosphere of the personality cult and of Ceausescu's authoritarian rule. Striving to isolate the country from our influence, he is now trying to dress in the robes of a "fighter for the purity of socialism," and makes indirect arguments against us. Some eruptions of discontent are possible in the country, but it is unlikely that they would become widespread now. The situation will, most likely, change only with Ceausescu's departure, which could bring along quite painful developments.

Yugoslavia entered a phase of political crisis in the context of very deep economic problems; this could lead to a substantial weakening of the positions of the UJY [Union of Yugoslav Communists], and even to a split of the federation.

3. Several possible scenarios of further development of socialist countries are distinguishable now. One of them is a smooth movement toward democratization and the new form of socialism under the leadership of the ruling parties. Under this scenario, some concessions regarding the issue of governing, significant growth in self-governing, strengthening of the role of representative organs in the political life, bringing the constructive opposition in to governing the society, and even possibly its turning into one of the forces contesting the power, cannot be excluded. This road toward a parliamentary, or a presidential, socialist republic in some countries (PPR, HPR, CSSR) would be preferable for us. If the initiative for democratic changes originates with the ruling party, the chances of preserving internal stability, and obligations to the allies are very high.

Another scenario – is a way of leaps and bounds, which would be a direct continuation of the preceding development, when the ruling party makes concessions after a new mini-crisis. This scenario lets us avoid the worst – a political eruption – but it moves the party away, to the sidewalks of the political life, and strengthens the pessimism, the disbelief in socialism, stimulates the demands of the opposition, and gradually prepares the society for a leaving the framework of socialism. The transition of a country to the traditional mixed economy and free play of political forces would not, in all cases, lead it to abandon its obligations to the allies, but in such a case the foreign policy orientation of that country would become a subject of intense political struggle.

In the end, a third way is possible too – preservation of the existing system of governing in the society along with suppression of the social and political activity of the masses. Under this scenario, it would be characteristic to undertake an openly conservative course, limited reforms, mostly in the management of the economy, and to actively reject the Soviet *perestroika*. In the future, such a course does not exclude a violent resolution of the crisis situation via a social explosion with unpredictable consequences for the country's internal and foreign policy. The main catalyst of such a crisis could be an increase in the dissatisfaction of the population as a result of economic deterioration, and worsening living standards.

4. In this critical, transitional period, our relations with socialist countries continue to remain our priority. But not in the sense, which we implied before, when the Soviet Union and its allies were, in essence, in international isolation, and so the relations with

each other considerably outweighed our ties with the rest of the world. Since then, the new political thinking, the energetic efforts undertaken by the USSR and its allies in the recent years have rapidly changed the international situation. It is natural that the relative weight of our relations with the socialist countries in our foreign policy became different. However, that does not change the fundamental fact that the degree of our interdependence with the socialist countries remains higher than that with the rest of the world, and that the internal stability and the influence of socialism in world affairs depend on that.

From a geopolitical point of view, the importance of European socialist countries for the Soviet Union was determined by the fact that from the very beginning they played a role of a certain security belt, which created a strategic cover for the center of socialism. Today, notwithstanding all the changes in the international situation, this role of Eastern Europe, and especially of the GDR, Poland and Czechoslovakia, remains unchanged to some extent.

It is a complicated question – what could and should be the forms of our influence on the socialist countries in the new conditions?

Authoritarian methods, direct pressure have clearly outlived itself. In the political sphere, even in the case of a sharp deterioration of situation in one of the countries – and we cannot exclude such a possibility today – it is very unlikely that we would be able to employ the methods of 1956 and 1968, both as a matter of principle, but also because of unacceptable consequences. Use of force would be admissible only in one case – if there were a direct and clear armed interference of external forces in the internal developments of a socialist country. Therefore, essentially, our only methods of leverage could be our political and economic ties.

5. The state of economic relations assumes a growing political importance. Their role is evident for the majority of socialist countries. And for us they have a great importance also. We should decisively discard the stereotype that those countries are our dependents. In contradistinction to the routine perceptions, the economic effects of our trade with European CMEA countries is rather favorable for us. It can be seen from the following examples.

Share of goods imported from the CMEA countries in the overall volume of goods consumed in the USSR:

Metal rolling machinery – 40-50%; food technologies – 40%, textile technology – 50%, chemical industry technologies – 35%; lumber and woodwork equipment – about 30%; polygraphic equipment – more than 40%; meat, meat products, vegetables and other produce – up to 10%; non-food consumer products – 10-15%.

According to our calculations, we get up to 4 rubles of profit for each ruble of value of oil sold in the CMEA countries (the effectiveness of oil exports to these countries in 1987 was 493%). Apart from that, by buying food products and consumer goods in those countries, we have a substantial budgetary profit when we sell them in the USSR at our retail prices. Thus in 1987, for each ruble of expenses on the import of meat and meat products we had the following profit from the domestic sales – 96 kopecks, cotton textiles – 1.76 rubles, coats and dresses – 2.24 rubles, leather shoes – 2 rubles, personal care items – 2.92 rubles, china – 2.81 rubles, furniture – 89 kopecks, and so on.

The conditions for grain purchases, in particular, in the countries of CMEA (Hungary, Bulgaria) are more favorable for us than on the world market. For example, we need to sell approximately 1.45-1.5 tons of oil to buy a ton of wheat on the world market for convertible currency; to buy it in the CMEA countries mentioned above, we would need to sell approximately one ton of oil.

At the same time, the old forms of economic cooperation have been to a large extent exhausted. The volume of commodity turnover is decreasing. The USSR is already unable to satisfy the demand of the CMEA countries for increases of deliveries of fuel and raw materials; and on a number of vitally important resources—oil, for example—we are actually planning to decrease the deliveries in the coming five-year period. We are also unable to provide these countries with modern technology. As a result of drop in prices for energy resources (mostly oil), by the end of the next five-year period, the Soviet Union could end up with a negative trade balance with European CMEA countries of more than 7 billion rubles.

The issue of transition to integration has been already raised. It is especially sharp for our CMEA partners. Without actively joining the processes of international economic integration they would be simply incapable of ensuring a radical renewal of their economies.

It appears that the strategic goals established for this sphere earlier – the course for creating a CMEA common market and appropriate instruments (convertibility of currencies, wholesale trade, and others) [–] continue to be fully relevant. However, their realization has been unsatisfactory. Many joint decisions notwithstanding, industrial cooperation is clearly stagnant. The comprehensive program of scientific and technological cooperation of the CMEA countries, which raised such hopes, has been practically foiled.

After the Working Summit in 1986 the joint work of CMEA countries somewhat picked up. Direct ties between enterprises were developed, and joint enterprises were established. However, the new forms of interaction have not had any significant impact on the volume and structure of exchange (direct ties represent less than 1% of the turnover volume).

The temptation to reorient the economies of the socialist countries toward the West grows stronger. Export of products of best quality to the West has become a norm. Often CMEA countries compete with each other on the capital markets.

Experience shows that it is impossible to solve the problem of economic integration with the help of general, even the best, programs. It is necessary to accumulate relevant material, organizational, legal, and other types of prerequisites in all the countries. Success here will depend, first of all, on cardinal changes in the Soviet economy, in its structure, in the economic mechanism, and in expansion of its export potential, which would take at least several years.

What could we do in the existing situation? First of all, we should not allow our prestige as a reliable economic partner to weaken. Each breach of contract – and such cases are becoming more frequent – puts socialist countries in a difficult, sometimes even hopeless, situation. Accumulation of similar facts in the economic sphere leads to unfavorable for us political consequences. We should overcome this illness, up to the point where we should reconsider the proposals of our Ministries on such a complicated issue as the volume of our oil deliveries for the next five-year period. This should be done in the spirit of our former agreements.

Coordination of efforts for the conversion of the military economy could become one of the new channels of economic influence on the socialist countries, especially because the military-industrial complex of the socialist countries is integrated to a higher degree than their civilian economies. One more opportunity would be to develop a common concept of alleviating foreign debt, which is extremely large in a number of socialist countries.

Lastly, when we intensify our economic ties with the West, it is important to actively try to bring our socialist partners into those contacts, in order to overcome the impression, which some of them have, that we are losing our attention to the fraternal countries. We probably should hold a specific discussion with them to talk about a possibility of their joining in the realization of projects that are carried out with the help of Western credits, to finally work out a coordinated strategy of integrating the socialist commonwealth into the global economic relations.

6. A number of new tasks have emerged in the sphere of political cooperation. Just several years ago we would have considered many of the developments that are underway now in the socialist countries as absolutely unacceptable for us. Today we need a deeper, more flexible, and differentiated approach to what is useful for us, what is admissible, and what is unacceptable. At the same time, it is important that we realistically assess our opportunities, find out exactly where we can realistically have an influence, and where our interference could only aggravate the situation.

The measure of socialism in the transformations that are underway now in the socialist countries is a difficult question. Some of them are allowing not only the extensive development of market relations, but also forms of private property, and widespread inflow of foreign capital. And still, it appears that we should not exaggerate the danger of one of the countries simply switching to the capitalist way of development. The roots developed by socialism are very deep. Such a transition would mean a fast breakup of all the economy [and] its structures, development of crises, rapid deterioration of living standards for the majority of the population. And it is very unlikely that the West would be inclined to take the countries whose economy was marked by crisis elements, and large foreign debts on its balance.

It is characteristic that the ideas that are presented from time to time about the "marshallization" [i.e., a new "Marshall Plan"— ed.] of certain socialist countries (in particular, of Hungary and Poland, for example in the form of a conversion of their debt into foreign investment) so far have not enjoyed any noticeable support in the West — due to the volume of expenses, and to unpredictability of economic and political consequences. Although we should not completely discard this possibility in the [future], we should be more concerned about the possibility of an economic collapse or anarchic explosions in the context of social tensions and lack of [future] prospects. This concerns the countries where the regimes continue to stay in power by further tightening the screws (Romania, KPDR [North Korea]).

We need to give special comprehensive consideration to the processes of formation of the structures of political pluralism, of the coalition and parliamentary type, of legalization of the opposition, that are unfolding in a number of countries. Of course, this is an uncharted road, which requires that the parties possess both the strength of principles, and tactical flexibility; the ability to lead the process, and not to leave it up to the opposition forces.

The lessons of several crises have shown that the main danger posed by an opposition is not the fact of its existence in itself, but that it could unite all kinds of forces and movements in the society which are dissatisfied by the existing situation on a negative, destructive platform. Therefore, pulling a part of the opposition into the official structure, assigning to it the responsibility for constructive solutions for the problems that have accumulated, could play a stabilizing role.

In the existing difficult circumstances the processes of our perestroika have a special influence on the internal processes in the socialist countries. In some sense, there

also, it created a new situation. Whereas before, any mass expressions of dissatisfaction with the existing situation, which flared up from time to time in the socialist countries, assumed an anti-Soviet character almost automatically, now such a direct relationship has disappeared. A serious blow was dealt to the idea of impossibility to reform the unidimensional socialism that finds its basis in the experience and example of the Soviet Union.

Perestroika has brought us objectively closer to the countries which are trying to reform their economic and political system (China, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary), but at the same time has created certain problems in the relations with some of our traditionally close allies, whose leadership continues to rely on the administrative and command methods.

In this situation we have to face the question of how to build our relations with the parties and the countries, leadership of which exhibits a reserved attitude toward our perestroika (the GDR, Romania, Cuba, KPDR). Here, clearly, we need patience and tolerance, we need to understand the positions of such parties as the [SED], the Communist Party of Cuba, which, due to their specific, and sometimes even front-like circumstances of development, experience particular problems in accepting and implementing the processes of economic restructuring, and the democratization of the society.

7. The general development of world politics and the increased differentiation of the national interests of socialist countries require that we make corrections to the approach to coordination of our joint steps in the international arena.

Most importantly, the process of deconfrontation in the world, the decreasing weight of the military-strategic and the increasing weight of political factors of security, objectively increase the role of our friends. And it is not only because the reductions of conventional weapons in Europe moved to the forefront of the all-European process in all its dimensions, taking into account the new quality that was conferred on it by the Vienna meeting. Without the active and positive participation of our allies progress on those issues is simply impossible. Therefore, we can speak about not just mutual information, about informing sometimes in the last minute, but about preliminary coordination of our actions.

However, the problem is much bigger. Essentially, the period when the reduction of military threat was achieved primarily within the framework of Soviet-American relations is not that far from its logical conclusion. Internationalization of major international issues is growing. And if that is so, then friends' advice, [and] consultations with them should involve not only concrete topics under consideration, but also the entire complex of the issues of world economy and politics. Only in this case they can have a real, not just ostentatious, feeling of belonging to the development and implementation of the common socialist foreign policy. At the same time, our initiatives would assume a more respectable, and in some ways, considering the experience of our friends, more substantive, character.

However, there is also another side of this. The pluralism of interests of different socialist countries is more and more noticeable. Reduction of military budgets in some of them takes on a rate that is ahead of our own, whereas, in others it creates anxiety for the future of their own rather developed and integrated with us military industry. In a similar fashion, the humanization of international relations, introduction of human rights in international relations, is perceived by some of the governments as a threat to socialism; for others it serves as an additional impulse to enter the road to "openness" in their own

countries.

The difference of opinions sometimes leads to flashes of nationalist feelings, that aggravate relations between the countries (Romania-Hungary). It could be anticipated that internal socio-economic and political difficulties would strengthen the desire to play on the sensitive strings of nationalism in leaderships of certain countries.

Taking into account all these different interests, it is not at all necessary to try to achieve consensus as a goal in itself at any price during our discussions and consultations with our friends. We should not allow a situation where one of the countries would tie our hands as a matter of their national ambitions. Each country should have a right to preserve its freedom of action, of course, along with explaining its position to the allies and substantiating it. Also, it is not in our interest to transfer any kind of aggravated nationalist tensions between our friends to the multilateral basis, especially if such an "argument" involves us directly. Of course, it is a different matter, if we are faced with an opposition of many, or even the majority of the socialist countries to our action – in such a case it would be a signal for us to have another look if that step was the right one.

8. In spite of the fact that we have repeatedly stressed that we had discarded our command-administrative approach to socialist countries, the syndrome of such an approach persists in the thinking of our friends. At the same time, the conservative part of the leadership would like, in essence, for the Soviet Union, to continue its role as some kind of "protector" of socialist countries. However, a significant portion of the public expresses its anxiety concerning the existing situation in which they see vestiges of such a paternalism. This finds its expression in different attitudes toward the presence of the contingents of our troops in the socialist countries, and it is linked with the influence on the internal processes, not with external threats to their security. There is continuing anxiety about how the Soviet Union would react in the situation of a political crisis in one of the countries, in which the ruling party's control of the situation would be threatened. There is dissatisfaction with the still-present inequality in the military mechanism of the Warsaw Treaty, leadership of which practically represents a Soviet military headquarters with purely formal presence of representatives of other countries.

Here lies a significant reservoir of our possible steps for removing the above mentioned "irritants", including ensuring a real participation of our friends in the military mechanism of the Warsaw Treaty, eliminating the negative internal political aspect of the presence of our troops, possibly through "internationalization." It would be advisable to direct our efforts to achieve a situation where in some countries, where it is necessary, they would have joint formations of troops of those countries of the Warsaw Treaty which agree to do it, instead of the Soviet troops.

It is most important to work out a balanced approach to the problem of the possibility of our interference in the event of a political crisis in one of the countries. It presupposes our affirmation of the principle of freedom of choice as a universal basis of the world order. But at the same time, it should leave a certain vagueness as far as our concrete actions are concerned under various possible turns of events, so that we do not stimulate the anti-socialist forces to try to "test" the fundamentals of socialism in a given country.

Finally, it is necessary to take into account the growing attention of our friends to the still remaining "white spots" in our relations; this interest will most probably become even more pronounced this year [1989] in connection with the 50th anniversary of the beginning of World War II, and the signing of the Soviet-German pact. It would be expedient to work on our interpretation of the nature and the origins of World War II,

employing the newly defined approaches to the assessment of our policy in the 1930-40s, and to discuss it with our friends ahead of time.

9. In the present circumstance we could formulate the following “minimum program” for our relations with socialist countries in the transitional period:

First of all, we should have a balanced and unprejudiced analysis of the development of socialist countries, of their relations, and we should prepare scenarios of our reaction to possible complications or sharp turns in their policies ahead of time, at the same time decisively rejecting the old stereotypes, and avoiding willful improvisations, which did us a lot of harm in the past. We should step up our joint study of and efforts to find ways out of the existing crisis situation, of the new vision of socialism and of modern capitalism, and of the possibilities and the limits of their interaction, mutual influence, and mutual assimilation.

Second, we should keep in mind that the significance of our contacts with the party and state leadership of the socialist countries is preserved and even increases in significance, especially because in the existing situation our friends could develop a “complex of being abandoned,” a suspicion that the priority of relations with friends proclaimed by us is not filled with real meaning. Inter-party contacts, if they are accompanied by an open analysis of problems, discussion, exchange of information about intentions, would allow us to directly feel the pulse of the fraternal parties, to give them moral support.

Third, in explaining the essence of *perestroika* policy, we should carefully try to avoid any artificial transfer of our experience to the context of other countries, which could be perceived by them as a relapse to the administrative-command methods, restriction of their independence, and could eventually lead to undesirable circumstances.

Fourth, by strictly adhering to our obligations we should preserve the existing ties that link the socialist countries to the USSR, and try to ensure that the inevitable and to a certain extent beneficial for common interests process of integrating the socialist economies with the West develops in a balanced, coordinated way, is not accompanied by unacceptable economic and political costs, and would strengthen integration processes among socialist countries.

Fifth, taking into account the key role of the armed forces in the case of a possible deterioration of the situation, it is important to keep up the genuine partnership between the armies of the socialist countries both on a bilateral basis and in the framework of the Warsaw Treaty, by eliminating all the elements of inequality.

Sixth. We should continue our line for decreasing our military presence in the socialist countries, including in the future, the possibility of a complete withdrawal of our troops from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. We should consider the scenario of “internationalization” of the remaining troops, of creation of joint formations.

Seventh. It is certainly in our interest that the changes that are ready to happen in the socialist countries, with all the possible variation, develop, as much as possible, without extra shocks and crises, in the framework of socialist solutions. But we have to account for a possibility of a different turn of events. In such a situation, it would be important that the ideological differences on the issues of the renewal of socialism, and finding ways out of the crisis situations that have manifested themselves in the socialist world, did not assume a character of conflict, and did not have negative influence on the relations between our states, did not lead to antagonism toward the Soviet Union.

This presupposes making a distinction between the interest of preserving the ruling communist parties at the wheel of power by all means, and the interest of preserving

alliance relations with those countries.

Eighth. By making use of the favorable opportunities created by *perestroika*, which overturned the stereotypes of “Moscow conservatism,” we should actively seek channels for contacts with all the forces that make claims for participation in the realization of power in the socialist countries. Contacts [with] churches are becoming more important because the church influence is on the rise in the socialist countries.

* * *

In general, at this stage, it is particularly important to reject the old stereotypes in our approaches, which outlived themselves. If a country disagrees with us, and sometimes even seriously – this does not necessarily mean that it is turning to the West; if the role of the party in one of the countries is questioned – this does not yet determine that it would definitely distance itself from us. The dialectics of the real processes, as our experience has shown, is much more complex. Yugoslavia and China “distanced” themselves from us some time ago, but they have not turned into capitalist states. In Poland, the party can realistically become just one, and maybe not even the main, [part] of the power structures; however, the geopolitical situation of the country is such that even the opposition understand the necessity of preserving some form of alliance with our country.

All this presupposes studying and trying to predict concrete scenarios of development of the situation in every country, including the most extreme ones, making decisions as to what those scenarios could mean for our relations – and implementing them in practical action on this basis.

*Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation
Moscow, Russian Federation*

*Translated by
Svetlana Savranskaya*

On file at the National Security Archive, donated by Professor Jacques Levesque.

Document 8.

Bogomolov Institute Memorandum on Changes in Eastern Europe
and their Impact on the USSR

February, 1989.



**Memorandum to Alexander Yakovlev from the Bogomolov Commission
(Marina Sylvanskaya)
February 1989**

CHANGES IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE USSR

Societies in Eastern European countries are beginning to change their character. Attempts to build socialism with Stalinist and neo-Stalinist methods, not without an active involvement of the Soviet side, ended up in a deadlock. This situation brings about an aggravation of contradictions and crisis developments. The degree and scale of conflicts vary: from the more or less hidden social-political tension, pregnant with sudden explosions, to the chronic crisis without any visible ways out – the crisis that signals the beginning of disintegration of the social-political system and that does not exclude cataclysms as well. Such processes are irreversible, they result from the long-term evolution of the regime and in a majority of countries they favor the transition to a new model of socialism but also can possibly lead to a collapse of the socialist idea. In the last year or year and a half there has been a rapid acceleration of developments in Eastern Europe, and there are more elements of unpredictability there.

General characterization of social-political processes
in the countries of Eastern Europe

Crisis symptoms are visible in all spheres of public life inside those countries as well as in relations among them.

In the people's economy the intensity of these symptoms vary from the slow-down of economic growth, a widening social and technological gap with the West, a gradual proliferation of deficit on domestic markets and the growth of external debts (GDR, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria) all the way to the real threat of economic collapse (Yugoslavia, Poland). Particularly dangerous is open and hidden inflation that has become a common phenomenon and only varies by degree: creeping and galloping inflation is predominant, but one cannot exclude its escalation into hyper-inflation (Poland, Yugoslavia). A "black market economy" and corruption is gaining in strength everywhere, and periodically bursts out in scandals and "affairs" that carry political connotations.

In the political sphere the crisis manifests itself first of all in the dramatic decline of positions of the ruling communist parties, in some cases so dramatic that one can speak about a crisis of confidence in them. Some of these parties undergo an internal crisis: their membership is decreasing, since rank-and-file members do not want to share responsibility for decisions which had nothing to do with them. The old social base is eroding. Infighting in the leadership is pregnant with split-ups (most probably in Yugoslavia, also there are obvious symptoms in Hungary, low-tone signals are in Poland and Czechoslovakia). Under pressure from multiplying and growing alternative political structures (embryos of new parties, clubs, and movements) [the Socialist Worker Party of Hungary] and PUWP [Polish United Workers' Party] have become so weak that they have to share power and accept coalition forms of government, to agree to a transition to a genuine multi-party system and to the legalization of dissenting opposition forces. In somewhat other forms this occurs in the UJC [Union of Yugoslav Communists]. Alternative forces develop an international character. Conservatives acquire international contacts (for instance, in GDR

– CSSR [Czechoslovakia] – SRR [Socialist Republic of Romania]).

Very much crisis-ridden is the sphere of ideology. Its old forms block the renewal of the socialist order and provide the rationale for counter-reformism (GDR, Romania, Czechoslovakia). Dogmatic social sciences are incapable of working out a convincing ideological rationale for long-needed reforms. In public opinion – particularly among the youth – spreads apathy, a sense of doom, nostalgia for pre-Revolutionary (i.e. pre-World War 2 or even earlier) times, a lack of faith in the potential of socialism. Extreme manifestations of these sentiments can be seen in increasing emigration (Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania). Positions of some social groups are getting dangerously radical; there is a growing trend towards anarchy and violence (Poland, Hungary, GDR, Czechoslovakia, the Yugoslav Confederation). The spread of video equipment, satellite broadcasting, and personal computers with printers brings about the explosion of an independent culture (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia).

Degradation of common ties take place in various forms. Visibly lower is the interest in present-day forms of integration and also the hopes to increase substantially its effectiveness through direct ties and cooperation in technology. Due to profound structural problems and flaws in the mechanism of trade cooperation, the bilateral trade exchange with the USSR is going down, which produces very negative consequences for the national economies of our partners and forms additional obstacles in the way of economic reforms (underutilized capacities in most countries, inflation of mutual in-kind [*klivingovoie*] indebtedness). In some cases inter-ethnic relations have grown worse: the Hungarian-Romanian conflict became open; mutual antipathy between Germans and Poles, Poles and Czechs, Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians has increased.

Two groups of countries stand out by the degree of crisis tendencies.

In Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia crisis processes are developing intensely and openly: having broken to the surface once, they have acquired a certain inertia. The acuteness of the social-political situation in these countries stems first of all from the mass scale of workers' protests. "A new working movement" is being born. Its scope is such that it is impossible any longer to treat the strikes as sporadic excesses or, as was the case of Poland, to attribute them to the influence of anti-socialist forces inside and from abroad. The strikes obviously escalate into the ongoing social conflict between the working strata's and the party and government techno-bureaucracy. Rank-and-file communists often actively take the side of strikers. Trade union movements are getting rapidly politicized (some symptoms of it can also be observed in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia). Official trade unions are beginning to play the role of the legal opposition; independent trade unions are proliferating; trade union pluralism is taking root.

In all three countries living standards of very substantial parts of the population are sinking, their revenues are shrinking to the social minimum and further down. Simultaneously differentiation in income is becoming more pronounced, and a speculative strata is emerging.

Public opinion comes to the realization of the process heretofore hidden from it, such as the fact of the continuing exploitation of the employed labor. Some leaders of the UJC have publicly admitted the existence of the struggle for redistribution of added value produced by workers, and the fact of their exploitation (for instance, through inflation). Discussion about specific forms of exploitation has begun in Poland.

The public consciousness of the working class and other working people is increasingly being formed [by forces and factors] outside of the ruling communist parties. The pressure from "below" plays an ambiguous role: by pushing the leadership to reforms,

it simultaneously curbs and even sometimes blocks attempts to revitalize the economy, to modernize structures of public production at the expense of income growth and living standards. When an ongoing crisis erupts from time to time ("crisis inside crisis") without getting a peaceful and constructive resolution, problematic and even deadlock-type situations emerge as a result. The probability of social explosions is getting higher.

The social-class nature of the ruling parties that are undertaking the turn toward radical reforms is in question now, since it is very problematic that they will be able to rely on the entire working class, particularly on its largest groups employed in the coal industry, metallurgy, ship-building industry, and other traditional industries which go under in the whole world. Besides, it is well known that Marxist-Leninist parties traditionally saw their historic mission first of all in expressing the interests of workers as the most progressive class whose interests objectively coincide with the interests of the working people. Under present conditions this understanding has been increasingly complicating practical steps towards the revitalization and modernization of the economy, since short-time material interests of the working class (at least its substantial part – employed in physical labor) clash with longer-term interests of society at large... The governments of Poland and Hungary are seeking to accelerate the changes in the structures of public production, by carrying out the policy of "socialist Thatcherism." Since such a policy hurts substantial segments of the working class and lacks ideological justification, the workers, among them the rank-and-file party members, rise in protest while referring to old ideological formulas.

The ruling parties fail chronically and badly in their reaction to the course of social-political developments. None of them has so far proved to be capable of seizing the initiative. Apparently this owes to the lack of clear prospects for renewal, the lack of a contemporary socialist vision. So far this problem has been alleviated because of the absence of alternative constructive platforms. But today the opposition has most obviously been attracting the intellectual potential (Poland, Hungary) and has been developing its own ideology and political program.

The developing situations in Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland touch on geopolitical and geo-strategic interests of the Soviet Union to a varying degree. Whatever would be the outcome of the Yugoslav crisis, it would only marginally affect our society, without any serious direct ideological effect. On the contrary, the course of events in Hungary and especially in Poland will affect us directly and very painfully by buttressing the position of [our] conservative forces and breeding doubts on the chances of the survival of *perestroika*.

In Czechoslovakia, GDR, Bulgaria and Romania (all the differences in economic position notwithstanding) analogous internal social-political conflicts are still implicit, hidden, even though they are clearly detectable. They tend, however, to exacerbate, and there are the telling symptoms that demonstrate (to political scientists) real harbingers of tension:

- Under-fulfillment of excessively optimistic plans and programs (particularly regarding consumption), unexpected growth of inflation, declining indicators of living standards, proliferation of uncontrollable spontaneous processes in economic life.
- Growing dissatisfaction with the existing situation in the sphere of distribution of material goods and with equality of opportunities, aggravation of the problem of social justice.
- Intensifying discussions at party congresses, more frequent resignations of politicians, cadre cadrille [*chekharda*].

- Fermentation in the intelligentsia, particularly in its creative components.
- Exacerbation of the generational conflict.
- Crisis of morale, proliferation of social pathologies (crime, drug-addiction, etc.).
- Accumulating feelings of social frustration (deprivation) in large social groups, spilling over into “witch hunts,” sometimes into aggressive ethnic conflicts, anti-worker and anti-intellectual sentiments.

These symptoms are manifesting themselves in various combinations and at different volumes. Social-political conflicts remain hidden largely due to harsh controls exercised by repressive structures over public life and to strict limitations on the mass media. But in some cases these factors are no longer sufficient to prevent acts of protest (in Czechoslovakia, GDR, and even Romania). Further tightening of the controls and more persecutions can either trigger an uncontrollable chain reaction – all the way to an explosion (it is quite possible in Czechoslovakia) or encounter a negative reaction of the world public opinion and the introduction of very painful economic and political sanctions. For instance, the repressive totalitarian regime in Romania is increasingly finding itself in international isolation, and amicable contacts with N. Ceausescu, while promising no preferential treatment on the part of the SRR today, even less in the longer term, could only compromise politicians [who engage in such contacts] in the eyes of world public opinion.

Political forecast

In the countries of the first group the crisis has acquired visible forms and the sides in the conflict are lined up, but the prospect of further developments is not clear; there are several alternatives. There are none among them that would presuppose the preservation of traditional forms of governance by the ruling parties and their full control over the society. Despite all assurances and words, real chances to keep developments in the framework of socialist renewal are shrinking. The existing model of socialism only with enormous difficulty can be transformed into a more effective and modern social setup. There are serious obstacles to a less-than-costly resolution of the crisis situation. Furthermore, scenarios of deadlock and catastrophe are coming to the fore.

Poland

1. Most favorable scenario: The conclusion of a so-called anti-crisis pact at “roundtable” talks, which could mean an unstable compromise between the PUWP (and its allied parties), Solidarity (and the forces of the opposition intelligentsia) and the [GCTU? – the General Council of Industrial Trade Unions]. The gradual transition to a mixed economy, de-centralization and privatization of “the giants of post-war industrialization” through share-holding. Transition to one or another variant of a market economy. Advancement towards genuine party-political pluralism (free elections, redistribution of seats in the Parliament, co-optation of representatives of the present opposition into the government, access of the opposition to mass media) could increase the support on the part of the population of the country and the West. The latter could ameliorate the situation with payments on the external debt, to open channels for new credits, which could somewhat reduce the internal economic tension. However, even in this case popular protests would hardly be neutralized, and political instability would continue for a long time, producing micro-crisis periodically. This would complicate the decisive and energetic program of reforms. The weakening of the

PUWP would inevitably continue, as a result of the ideological crisis and internal struggle, but it would take a more gradual course, in a form which could allow an explosion to escape. Relations with the USSR would remain ideologized while Poland would remain a member of the WTO.

Terms of realization: preservation and consolidation of the authority of the present-day party-political leadership (W. Jaruzelski); containment of the pressure from "below" in a framework that would preclude radicalization of both trade union confederations.

2. Pessimistic scenario: Failure of the anti-crisis pact resulting from a clash between the conservative forces in the PUWP, radicalized GCTU and the extremist wing of the Solidarity, while minimal political contacts between the party-government leadership and the opposition survive. A protracted "deadlock" situation. Slow and ineffective changes in the economy, de facto pluralism in the society without effective mechanisms of taking and implementing decisions. Growing elements of anarchy. Transformation of Poland into the chronically "sick man of Europe."

3. Deadlock scenario: Failure of the anti-crisis pact, followed by an aggravation of relations with the opposition. Rapid escalation of the conflict until an explosion (the most probable timing in this case – the spring of 1989). Renewal of martial law or the situation approximating a civil war – "Afghanistan in the middle of Europe."

4. Recently, the first weak symptoms of yet another scenario have emerged. It is close to the first but is related to the formation of the Christian Democratic Party of Labor which, hypothetically, may grow into a big political force if supported by Solidarity (in a role of a Catholic trade union) and the oppositionist Catholic intelligentsia. The PUWP may probably welcome such a scenario since it could promise a cooperation with the Church which seeks to avoid an explosion. Yet the existing information provides no clues as to the change of the position of the Church which has so far preferred to stay in the role of mediator [*tręteiskogo sudii*].

This last month produced good chances for development according to the first scenario. There is no absolute guarantee that it will be realized, since there are no assurances that the traditionalist forces would not defy the course of the 10th Plenum of the CC PUWP at the forthcoming party conference, and that the Solidarity would and could contain the rising mass protest and observe the two-year armistice. Specific conditions of Poland may turn the first and especially the second scenarios into the sliding-scale to a deadlock. The chance for an explosion in the PPR [Polish People's Republic] is far bigger than in other countries of Eastern Europe.

In a longer-term perspective even the most favorable scenario does not ensure preservation of the socialist choice. Evolution towards a classic bourgeois society of the type of Italy or Greece is highly likely.

Hungary

1. Most Probable Scenario: Radical reforms in the state sector of the economy, partial re-privatization of industries and agriculture, transformation of the economy into a mixed one, functioning on the basis of market relations. Further strengthening of organizational ties with the European Union and perhaps with EAST [?], growing cooperation with Austria. Step-by-step rebuilding of the parliamentary system on the foundations of party pluralism. Along with the inevitable decline of cooperation with the COMECON and formal continuation of membership in the WTO, there will come a tendency towards neutralism and possibly a movement towards some kind of

Danube federation if this idea takes shape and gains support among Hungary's neighbors.

Terms of realization: the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, as a result of considerable strengthening of positions of its reformist wing in its leadership and in the party as a whole seizes the initiative in transformation of the social-economic and political structures; gradual formation of a coalition with the Social Democratic movement (not excluding the transition of a considerable number of the party members to the Social Democrats or the peaceful split into two parties). Even if the influence of other parties increases in the short run, the course of events will probably become a modicum of the first scenario, since none of the movements cannot compete in strength and influence with the reformist circles of the HSWP and the forces of Social Democratic orientation.

2. Pessimistic scenario: Concessions to the conservative wing of the party which retains strong positions in the medium and lower ranks. Attempts to minimize deviations from the traditionalist schema. Inconsistency and compromises in carrying out reforms. The growth of economic and political tension. Further decline of living standards, the growth of a strike movement, politicization of trade unions. Possible declaration of bankruptcy on the external debt, aggravated relations with the creditors, including international monetary-financial institutions. Building obstacles on the way to the legal construction of some oppositionist parties and movements. Postponement of parliamentary elections. Further fall of authority of the reformist wing in the present-day leadership of the HSWP and of the supporting forces in the party and state apparatus. Weakening electoral chances of the HSWP (including an electoral defeat). Transition of initiative to alternative political forces. As a result, a return to the necessity of radical reforms, but under new, economically and politically less propitious circumstances.

[...] The first scenario's implementation is not yet out of the question, but the most probable seems to be some kind of middle way between the first and the second scenarios. Inevitable aggravation of the internal situation in this case may propel events towards the first scenario or raise the chances of complete slide-back towards the second scenario. [...]

In a longer term the present-day situation in the countries of the second group appears to be more dangerous for the future of socialism and crisis phenomena there will inevitably take an open form. Czechoslovakia is the first candidate. In Bulgaria and Romania (possibly, also in the GDR) changes will come with a change of leader which will occur from natural causes. The character and tempo of subsequent events will depend on the degree to which the new generation of leadership, willing to defuse the accumulated tension and raise personal prestige, comes to decrease the grip of the repressive apparatus over society. The available data provides no evidence for a substantial forecast of alternatives, but it seems to be obvious that the more the tension is driven inside, the higher the chances for an explosion in one of these countries, with all the consequences that flow out of this.

Czechoslovakia

With high degree of probability one can expect rapid escalation as soon as this coming spring or in the fall. Causes: combination of strong public discontent with unjustifiably harsh crack-down on the last demonstration [in the anniversary of the February events and the day of the death of T. Masarik this crack-down will probably

take place again], with the first unpopular results of economic reforms (absence of bonuses in many unprofitable plants, etc.). Preventing such a course of events is possible by undertaking, at M. Jakes's initiative, a resolute change of a considerable part of the current party-state leadership, removal of the publicly compromised people, joint efforts together with L. Adamec and a beginning of practical steps towards socialist renewal and broad democratization. However, since, first, the General Secretary of the CC CCP has already twice failed to live up to public expectations and to declare himself an advocate of a new course, and, second, there is too little time left for preparation of such a step, the chances for such a favorable outcome are minimal. Extrapolation of the current situation points to a crisis, when order would be restored by force and all problems would again be driven inside.

In the course of events, one may expect an appearance in the political arena of the country of a new political force – the Club of socialist *perestroika*, headed by well-known leaders of the Prague Spring C. Cisarz and Cernik who adhere to socialist positions. This group has a solid constructive platform and can expect an influx of a large number of supporters: possibly up to 500-750 thousand. In a struggle with this political adversary, the leadership of the CCP has minimal chances for a victory. However, the struggle against the politicians and ideas of 1968 will be acute and will lead to a quick and rapid escalation of the crisis.

Romania.

1. Favorable scenario: Changes take place in the leadership of the country. As a result, N. Ceausescu is replaced by reasonable politicians capable of carrying out radical reforms and the ideas of renewal of socialism. There are good preconditions in Romania for the use of market-type relations, for a relatively dynamic restructuring and modernization of the people's economy with real unfettering of economic initiative and the creation of a multi-sector competitive economy.

2. Middle-dead end scenario: The present leadership of the country stays and so too the policy. If the resources that are freed as the external debt gets paid off are used for reducing social tension, then it is possible to maintain general political stability for quite a while, while conserving political problems of the country and ensuring the slowdown in its technical-scientific progress. If, however, the leadership chooses to ignore the task of improving the living standards of the population and deroutes the obtained resources for realization of new ambitious projects, then one cannot exclude a social explosion. In the case where the processes of renewal in other socialist countries by that moment have not proven the feasibility of the policy of reform, there could be the danger of a decisive turn of the country [i.e. Romania], whose population gets disenchanted in socialist values and traditionally brought up in the spirit of common destiny with the Latin [romanskii] world – in the direction of the West (including its exit from the WTO). Financial and material support from the West, highly probable under conditions of real changes, may prove to be very effective for the country possessing of a good deal of natural and economic resources.

Since the regime still has not exhausted its resources and has recently been accumulating the experience of combined repressive measures and social maneuvering to maintain social stability, the second scenario seems to be more likely. It is favor speaks also a relatively low level of national self-consciousness and the absence of organized opposition in Romania. At the same time, an obvious irrationality of the policy of the current leadership produces growing dissatisfaction not only on the grass-

roots level, but even among the ruling elite [verkhushki]. Therefore, a possibility of some kind of changes "from the top" cannot be excluded.

German Democratic Republic.

The conservative nature of the party leadership, the sectarian and dogmatic character of its positions on ideological questions, authoritarianism and harsh control of the repressive apparatus over the society are weakening the prestige of the party and heightening tensions in the country, as well as negativist sentiments among the population. Nevertheless the current line may survive for some time the change of the leadership.

There is no formal center of opposition in the GDR, although non-conformist movements with more or less formalized platforms do exist. So far they do not represent any force capable of applying a palpable pressure from below and of destabilizing the situation. With a degree of probability one can surmise that there are forces in the current ruling apparatus who not only can evaluate the situation soberly and analyze critically, but who can work out a constructive program of changes. Reformist sentiments do not come to the surface most likely, because potential advocates of a new course do not have sufficient assurances that the process of renewal in the USSR is inevitable. Besides they understand that far-going reforms in the GDR will hardly remain an internal affair and may trigger a change in the status quo in the center of Europe.

With this in mind, a *perestroika* in the GDR, if it occurs, will require from the USSR and other socialist countries a reevaluation of a number of established assumptions and perhaps a reappraisal of its interests in the center of Europe. Under conditions of democratization and *glasnost* this question will probably become the central one and on the mode of its resolution will depend [angle from which we should evaluate] the determination of the [GDR] leadership in carrying out reforms. In the long run one can foresee the proclamation of such goals as the creation of a unified neutral German state on the basis of confederation. A mid-term slogan "one state – two systems" may be also advanced.

Bulgaria

Underground fermentation and differentiation of social-political forces become the fact. So far they manifest themselves in local, impulsive flashpoints of resistance to the official ideology and the concept of social development, without growing into any significant movements. Further dynamic and directions of social-political shifts will be determined primarily by economic trends.

The leadership of the country worked out a concept of economic reform, but practical measures of its realization have not yet been sufficiently prepared, so in the nearest future real results can be hardly expected. More likely is a deterioration of the economic situation, particularly because of the growing debt to the West and the threat of bankruptcy, which will inevitably bring about unwanted social, and then political consequences. Against this background hotbeds of tensions might proliferate – including strikes, particularly among non-qualified and low-qualified workers.

Ideological influence of the party in the society is declining. Sentiments of opposition among the intellectuals who resent the use of force against the ecologists and the persecution of a number of scientists for critical speeches. There are seeds of alternative movements, and extremist elements are getting to the fore. Alternative political forces are still weak and not organized, but they can broaden their social base.

Withdrawal from the political scene of the present number one in the party may

provide an impetus for intra-party differentiation between the supporters of the old leadership and those who seek a genuine renewal. Forces capable of carrying out more balanced and reasonable policy do exist in the party, they enjoy enough authority, but they will face a difficult legacy.

Overall trend of social-economic and political development of the country tend to repeat the Hungarian scenario – with certain deviations, time gap and national specificity and eclectic emulation of experience of other countries. The fate of the Hungarian experiment may exercise a serious influence on future developments in the PRB.

Possible consequences for the USSR

The prospect of the weakening of the positions of the ruling parties including their removal from power, its transfer into the hands of other political forces, decline of Soviet influence in the countries of Eastern Europe, its involvement into the orbit of economic and political interests of the West require the formulation of a more rational and purposeful reaction of the Soviet Union. We face a dilemma: to thwart the evolution described above or take it in stride and develop the policy accepting a probability and even inevitability of this process.

Attempts to thwart the emerging trends would be tantamount to fighting time itself, the objective course of history. In the long term these kind of steps would be doomed and in the short run would mean wasting means and resources for an obviously hopeless cause. Attempts to preserve in Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia the status quo that lost its objective foundations, as well as the support of conservative forces in the GDR, CSSR, Romania and Bulgaria will weigh as an excessive burden on our economy, for the price of maintaining existing relations will increase in time. A use of forceful pressure from our side will inevitably reinforce the conservative wing in the upper echelons of power, breaking reforms where they have begun, worsening the crisis. Social-political tension in the societies will increase, anti-Soviet sentiments will grow stronger, which might spill over into the balancing on a brink of most acute social-political conflict with an unfathomable outcome. The direct use of force of the USSR, its intervention into the course of events on behalf of the conservative forces that are alienated from the people will most evidently signify the end of *perestroika*, the crumbling of trust of the world community in [our reforms], but will not prevent a disintegration of the social-economic and social-political systems in these countries, will not exclude mass outbreaks of protest, including armed clashes. Besides, not only nationally isolated events, but mutually interacting, chain-reacting “fuse-type” explosions can be expected.

In the framework of possibilities opened by new thinking and cooperation between the USSR and the United States, East and West, “architects” of American foreign policy can be seen as changing their priorities. They prefer the support of *perestroika* in the USSR and the creation of an external environment favorable to its success. Serious Western politicians warn against playing on problems of the socialist community, on its disintegration which, in their opinion, can bring about unexpected consequences for the Western world. Western circles of authority are coming to the conclusion that, by cooperating with reformist forces, they can achieve more than by attempting to pull socialist countries from the sphere of influence of the USSR one by one.

Working through the options for a future Western strategy towards Eastern Europe, bourgeois political scientists and some think-tanks consider a scenario of "Finlandization" of a number of countries of the region.¹

What could be the possible consequences of such a scenario for the USSR? The following aspects should be considered: military, international politics, internal politics, economic and ideological.

1. Poland will certainly not leave the WTO, since this is against its national, state, and geopolitical interests. Hungary will also hardly raise this issue in the foreseeable future. The forthcoming withdrawal of a part of the Soviet troops stationed on the territories of both countries will significantly reduce the political acuteness of this problem. The GDR will also not raise the question of leaving the WTO, since its party and state cadres consider this organization as one of its props. Only in a longer term, if the détente and the construction of a "common European house" will progress sufficiently far, the issue of a unified German confederate state might be put on the agenda. From the international angle this will most likely end up in the neutralization of both parts of Germany and the establishment of special relations of the GDR with NATO and the GDR with the WTO. Positions of Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia depend on many uncertain factors, but they will hardly leave the WTO in the foreseeable future. If relations with us worsen, the Romanian leadership may take up this issue, but with skillful ideological orchestration of this step will not lose anything, since geopolitical location will force the self-isolated Romania consider our interests. In the case of Yugoslavia, as it is well known, the question of the WTO does not figure at all.

So it is not necessary that the WTO – at least in the foreseeable future – will sustain significant losses, and the countries of Eastern Europe which are undergoing today serious transformations will stay in alliance with us.

2. As long as new foreign policy trends emerge in these countries of Eastern Europe which became the objects of special hopes for the US and the West as they conducted their policy of differentiation, the USSR can consciously take over the initiative from the West, as well as from the oppositionist, social-reformist forces inside those countries (Poland, Hungary), by adopting consciously a certain degree of "Finlandization" of these countries. Such a policy will demonstrate the seriousness of our global aims to get involved into world economic, political and cultural ties. Renunciation of the *diktat* with regard to socialist countries of Eastern Europe will nurture a more benevolent image of the USSR in the public opinion of these countries and around the world, and it will make the US seriously correct its foreign policy towards Eastern Europe.

The very chance that European socialist countries may take a mid-way position on the continent will intensify the interest of Western Europe in the maintenance of economic and political stability of Eastern Europe, as well as in the stimulation of the

¹ In the political dictionary this term mostly signifies the return of our neighboring states to the mode of capitalist development while preserving special, friendly relations with the Soviet Union that guarantee the security of its borders. Such understanding of the notion "Finlandization" overlooks two significant moments in the relations between the USSR and Finland. First, they are built on neutrality of our northern neighbor who does not join any military bloc; second, Finnish communist party by definition cannot come to power and to carry out a revolutionary coup which guarantees stability of [Finnish] social-political regime. Since the countries of Eastern Europe will hardly raise the issue of leaving the WTO in the near future and the ruling parties, even provided their rapid weakening, will retain for a while some social base, the term of "Finlandization" can be used here only with very significant qualifications.

process of disarmament and détente on the continent and around the world. Inevitable consequences of this will be the growth in significance of the European factor in world politics and economy, which will favor the efforts of the Soviet Union aimed at containing an anti-Soviet consolidation of the Western world and at developing a "common European house." The economic burden of the USSR will be alleviated. Anti-Soviet and nationalist influences will operate on the shrunken ground, and the prestige of the Soviet Union and its ideological-political influence on the broad strata of the population will grow – of course, if the political shift will be viewed as a result of our conscious decision, and not a result of the pressure of hostile forces. This will be a "revolution from above" in foreign policy which will prevent a "revolution from below."

3. It cannot be excluded that in some countries of Eastern Europe the crisis has gone so far and reforms have come so late that the ruling parties will not be able to retain power or will have to share it in a coalition with other political forces. By itself the fact of a transfer of power to alternative forces does not mean an external and military threat to our country. On the contrary, history gives examples, when the Soviet Union developed relations with non-communist leaders of Eastern European countries that were not too bad. Normal political activity of communist parties (along with other political parties) should not instill fear in non-communist governments that, under the disguise of international aid there will be a violation of popular sovereignty with a possible violation of its will expressed through free elections. Guarantees of non-interference into internal affairs of neighboring countries, respect for their political stability should be seen under present circumstances differently than in 1950s-1970's, for we have recognized ourselves the need for a different understanding of socialism in principle, have stopped trying to expand over the entire world the model that was in existence in our country, we have begun to realize the need for accounting in the socialist model for some basic characteristics of the Western mode of development (market, competition, civil society, civil liberties, etc.)

There is no question, of course, of renouncing the support of communist and workers' parties, but an obligatory precondition for such a support should be voluntary recognition of their leadership by their people, their legitimation. For the loss of trust they should pay as any other party in the normal democratic society. Similar logic dictates to us the need for support of business, civilized contacts not only with those political parties in the countries of Eastern Europe which are currently at the tiller, but also with the internal opposition, constructive opposition in the society – equally to our practice toward non-socialist states. Unwillingness to accept contacts with alternative forces in these countries could be interpreted as a form of interference into internal affairs, i.e. something which we have rejected as a matter of principle.

4. The objective outcome of the natural development of the trends towards "Finlandization" could be a new, middle-of-the road position of East European countries, since they, according to their internal order, the nature of economic ties and real international position would pass from the sphere of monopolistic influence of the USSR into the sphere of mutual and joint influence of the Soviet Union and European "Common Market." It is not excluded that in some future the European Economic Union will provide to some countries of Eastern Europe the status of an associate member. They could in this case become the first trappers [pervoprokhodtsami] in the process of integration between East and West. This process not only poses no threat to the interests of the USSR, but, on the contrary, will allow to multiply the benefits we

receive today from our cooperation with Finland and Austria, by linking to Western markets, achievements of Western science, know how and technology. When in 1992 a common market will start functioning in Western Europe, East European countries involved in the orbit of the EU may facilitate for us an access to this sphere.

5. In a new situation we will have to liberate ourselves from some persistent ideological stereotypes, for instance from the assumption that only a communist party in power can prove guarantees for the security of Soviet borders. We will have to rethink the notion of a "world socialist system." But the utility of these [notions] was purely fictional; it existed only in the realm alienated from life, in the didactic ideology which we have been striving to overcome. Consequently, the rejection of such categories and dogmas may only promote a new system of ideological coordinates that are emerging in the process of *perestroika* and the formation of new political thinking.

An optimal reaction of the USSR to the evolutionary processes taking place in Eastern Europe would be, as it turns out, an active involvement which would put them [processes] under control and would make them predictable. Even if some decline of Soviet influence in Eastern European affairs takes place, this would not cause us a fatal damage, but, perhaps on the contrary, as resulting from self-limitation, would put our means in a rational harmony with our capabilities. For we speak about a voluntary abandonment of only those levers of influence that are not in accordance with the principles of international relations proclaimed by the Soviet Union in the spirit of "new thinking."

Of course, such turn may produce collisions and conflicts, for instance if openly anti-Soviet, nationalistic groupings get legalized in this or that country. But their persecution, their underground existence will only help them gain in popularity, and their legalization, against the backdrop of our reserved policy and with the thoughtful criticism of them on the part of the friends of the USSR will lay bare the lack of perspective and short-sightedness of anti-Soviet assumptions.

Favorable international conditions for the progress of reforms in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe will give a powerful side-effect to the process of internal *perestroika* in the USSR. Structural modernization of their economies, development of market relations will help to overcome the elements of a beggar-thy-neighbor [izhdivenchestva] philosophy in their economic relations with the USSR and to transfer them onto the healthy ground of mutual profitability.

Possible practical steps of the USSR

In the light of the aforementioned, the following measures seem to be justified:

- Working on a strategic program to develop our relations with East European socialist countries in the framework of the new model of socialism and a calibrated reflection of this program in official documents and speeches.
- Advancement of our proposals to reform the Warsaw Treaty Organization, presupposing a bigger role of the fraternal countries in the management of the WTO, the creation of regional commands (taking the example of NATO) under the leadership of representatives of hosting countries. This would help to "tie" them into the WTO, which in practice is still regarded as a predominantly Soviet construct.
- A further gradual reduction of our military presence in Eastern Europe taken at our own initiative and upon agreement with the hosting countries, working on a schedule

of withdrawal of troops, the creation of the most propitious conditions for demilitarization of Central Europe (with its possible neutralization), reduction of American presence on European continent.

- Working through bilateral consultations on mutually beneficial measures allowing to alleviate consequences of restructuring in the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly where strong tension might end up in explosion.
- In case certain proposals are made, we should agree to some form of continuous and periodic consultations with West European countries and the US on the issues of prevention of explosions in this or that country of Central and Eastern Europe.
- Developing a practice of genuine consultations on the issues of foreign policy with our allies instead of informing them about the decisions that are already taken.
- Carrying out a serious analysis of activities of Soviet embassies in Eastern European socialist countries, in some cases leading to replacement of Ambassadors and leading officials of the Embassies who act against the interests of our foreign policy in its new phase. Special attention should be paid to our cadres in the countries where potential escalation of tension and even explosion is possible. During the change of cadres we should send to these countries those officials whose appointment will be a sign of attention, high priority the USSR holds for relations with socialist countries.
- While arranging summits in socialist countries, one should borrow the methods utilized in the leading capitalist countries (organization of "air-born" appearance [desantov] of leading Soviet scientists, figures of culture, etc.)
- It is necessary to work out without delay an integral line of behavior on the issues of "blank pages" in relations with each East European country (We should not ignore the accumulating negative fallout that resulted from our postponement of the resolution of these problems with regard to the PPR and HPR).
- It is highly important to change radically our informational policy with regard to events in socialist countries of Eastern Europe, to cover in an objective light and to explain and justify the processes that are taking place there, since it is equal to the explanation and justification of the measures that lay ahead for us in carrying out our economic and political reforms.
- While covering events in the fraternal countries, responding to the speeches of their leaders, we should express a manifest support to those pronouncements which signal their acceptance of reformist ideas (particularly with regard to the leaders of the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania), thereby showing on the side of what forces and trends the sympathies of the Soviet Union lie.
- Popularization of Soviet publications merits all kind of support. Proposals of our embassies in some countries to eschew such support are clearly in contradiction with our interests.

Some conclusions

Overcoming the crisis process in the countries of Eastern Europe presupposes the outright de-Stalinization. This should encompass their internal life as well as their relations with the Soviet Union. The model of economic and political development imposed on these countries after 1948 has clearly exhausted itself. The search for more fruitful ways and means of development is leading to the rethinking of the socialist ideal, including the revival of those assumptions about it that had formed in communist and workers parties of East European countries in 1945-1948 (mixed economy parliamentary

democracy, etc.). This means a return to a natural historical, instead of deformed by the external pressure, social progress that stems from national specifics of each country. To a certain degree one can speak about the end [preodolenii] of the Yalta legacy and the split of the world into the two enemy camps, about the gradual formation of the more varied and simultaneously more united Europe.

From the viewpoint of the world socialist perspective any attempt to stop this evolution by force could have the gravest consequences: the inevitable sliding back of Eastern European countries to the rank of poorly developed countries (so called "fourth world"), the undercutting of the socialist idea in all its versions, and providing to the neo-conservatism in the West with new cards to use in its offensive on the social achievements of working masses. Besides, Eastern Europe will inevitably get "flashpoints" and quasi-dictatorial regimes which would continuously detract material resources of the Soviet Union and would practically exclude the prospect of renewal of the socialist society in our country. However, the peaceful (without serious explosions) evolution of East European states would improve to a great extent the situation in the world and enhance international relations. Thereby chances would grow for an accelerated development in Eastern Europe, for the use of some socialist elements that can be found in the practice of highly-developed capitalist countries and, overall, the prospect of the formation of humanistic and democratic post-capitalist societies in accordance with the socialist ideals would be preserved.

*Document on file at the National Security Archive
Donation of Professor Jacques Levesque*

*Translated by Vladislav Zubok
National Security Archive*

Document 9.

Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee. Verbatim Record of Minutes.

February 7, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee

February 7, 1989

Verbatim Record of Minutes

[Subject:] **Draft position concerning current political issues; the proposed schedule of reforming the political system**

[...]

Miklós Németh: I would like to ask something. I see contradictions, or rather discrepancies concerning a couple of significant issues if I compare the Constitution on today's agenda and on the Central Committee's agenda on the 20th and the 21st, to this document. [...] I would like to give you an example. It is pointed out at certain places in this document [and] in a paragraph of the resolution that the MSZMP must have hegemony, and this document repeatedly states that it must be guaranteed by the Constitution. The document on the Constitution does not represent the same approach. So my question is: is it an intentional difference? I agree with the document on the Constitution, that is what I support. [Although] it is possible to say that the MSZMP aims to play a leading role within party pluralism, but to my mind it would be a sign of weakness to say so, because we would give it away during the transition period that we are too weak to compete and fight for positions unless we build in constitutional guarantees. I think there is no need to do this. But if it was intended, I would like to hear comrade Grósz's opinion on behalf of the committee. [...]

Imre Nagy: I would like to re-phrase comrade Németh's question a little bit. To what extent does the content of the draft position concern the period of transition, and to what extent does it concern the long run? Because I think it is reasonable to secure a favored position for the MSZMP for the transition period, to make that period controllable. But it would only be reasonable if we stated now that after the transition period it is [going to be] a purely competitive situation. So, how much of the proposed position concerns the transition period, and how much of it is considered permanent by the committee?

[...]

Fejti: [...] As far as the hegemony of the party as a goal is concerned, I think it is a political goal, and we cannot give it up as such. We have to say it aloud that it is our aspiration. To be the leading force in society. But it would not be... right to include that in the Constitution. We regard the Constitution as a permanent document for the long run, and it would not represent any practical gain for us. The core of the issue is that even if it is included there, we could be outvoted at the elections all the same. And so this situation should be avoided also because of what comrade Németh has pointed out, because it would be a sign of a lack of self-confidence.

At the same time the transition should be planned somehow, and certain guarantees are necessary in order to prevent any radical realignment of the situation. In legal terms there is an opportunity to achieve this in the framework of the bill concerning parliamentary elections, since it refers to the upcoming elections where –

if Parliament approves of it – certain positive or negative preferences can be legally asserted. It is another question that it will not be easy to carry out. But then, it would be a technical issue. So I think the two things can be handled separately this way and there is no need to refer to it in the Constitution. I assume we should talk about it in relation to the electoral law, but then it will be a technical issue.

Károly Grósz: So, I would start at the beginning. I can picture the transition period in two phases. The first phase would come to its end around the congress, that is, at the end of 1990, in my opinion. The second phase would be the period between '90 and '95. The new structure would become fully operational by the end of '95, or in '94 if we are faster. And that is because we must accept that parties are parties not only because they are registered as such with the Constitutional Court, I do not know where they will have to have [themselves] registered, and not just because they think up and make declarations, but rather because they represent a political force. And their political force will not be the result of rhetorics since this is a transitional and temporary period, but rather of their achievements, that is, if they have a program or a concept which proves to be a better solution of the fundamental problems of society and which is more accepted by society than what is offered by others – and mind you, I avoid saying 'the MSZMP' on purpose, it can be any other force. In my opinion this is what makes a party what it is.

Well, of course it would not happen in a month or in half a year. Therefore I believe [the] parties or certain groups [only] declare themselves parties at the moment. In the present conditions it could be prevented through administrative action, but it must not be handled in such a low way. We have to calculate with a longer time period for the emergence of parties. The first phase of it – which is quite likely to be dominated by emotions instead of real content, probably – is going to be around the elections of 1990. The real test comes after the elections and not before them. The program of negation will be [effective] until 1990, but after 1990 the negation of the past will not be a program. And so to my mind the transition period will last until 1995, roughly, its first phase takes this year and the first half of next year, and then the real power relations would develop. (*Interruption: '95 a slip of the tongue, isn't it?*) No, it is not. In principle that is when there are elections again. (*Rezső Nyers: And the crisis of the economy would last, it cannot be stabilized by then.*)

And the crisis period would be '92 – '93 when everyone is going to be weighed, and put in their places in the political structure, and that is when the MSZMP will be weighed as well – does it have a solution to the crisis, does it have a program to put an end to the crisis, and so on and so forth. So I do not think the transition would only take a couple of weeks or a couple of months. Consequently, I do not think the transition period is only about the constitutional reform or the creation of various institutions of the constitutional state or the fundamental phase of legislative work. Because in my opinion it would all happen in one and a half years, perhaps two years. (*Rezső Nyers: It will only change the players of the crisis.*) That is it. It will not be the solution to the crisis in itself. During this phase a system of political institutions will be created which will not be the Stalinist model anymore if everything goes well, which is far from certain yet, in my opinion at least, but it is not going to be the bourgeois model as it is, although at the moment I do not see much of a difference between the bourgeois model and this one, but it would be developed through debates as we go along anyway. Why do I say that I do not see

much of a difference? Because it is impossible to draw a conclusion from the titles, it is the actual contents that will determine whether this model is better than the bourgeois one. This has been the practice.

And if it is a long process, then it is inevitable and unescapable that there is certain duplexity here, there is a period of overlaps or even contradictions. Because I do not think that the electoral law to be enacted now is not to be corrected, let us say, before the elections in '95. But I think in respect of several things that what we accept today will have to be adjusted and rectified later, in the spirit of the new Constitution, in harmony with the new Constitution. I repeat there are – and will be – contradictions and overlaps, or even clashes. It would be beneficial to avoid at least the major ones.

For instance the reference to hegemony should be edit out from the Constitution. Although the present Constitution does include it, the new one is hopefully meant to be in effect for a longer period, and we would like to see the new Constitution in December. It would not be a big deal, either, if the Constitution were modified again when the transition period is over, because it is not an absolute necessity to create a constitution for decades. It can be amended. Nevertheless, we should try and not create a new Constitution which has to be amended after a couple of months or a year; I do think that a constitution is meant for a longer period of time. These differences of opinion should be smoothed away as we go along. Comrade Németh's observation is quite right. It is the result of a previous attitude, and basically the debate itself concerns that. I think it should be allowed to be debated, but then it should be taken out of the decision in order to avoid irritations. [...]

Let us turn to the issue of the head of state. It is not really referred to in this document, it is rather included in the one about the Constitution, and there is a very interesting phrase, I do not remember the exact wording of it, but it is something like 'of medium strength', not too powerful, but not weak, either, neither a puppet, nor a dictator. I do not know if it is acceptable scholarly or legally, but I would say it would be reasonable, it would be important to have a head of state 'of medium strength' in Hungary, to borrow the phrase. (*Interruption: My question is whether the parties would not eat him up?*) Well, I do not know... (*István Szabó: If he is from the Smallholders' Party, then it would be us who do so, if he is from the MSZMP, then it would be the Smallholders' Party.*)

In this respect it is recommended in the other document – in a kind of overlapping way – that he should not hold a party position, and he should be above the parties somehow. But it has never happened before. You can, of course, declare such a thing, there have been declarations like that, but in reality – well, he must come from somewhere, he is not born a head of government, a head of state. He must have some political record. And it would inevitably bind him. At the same time his actions should be outside party interests to a certain extent, and it is a big question mark, and that is why I think it is right to have control over the head of state as well, so that his actions would transcend the interests of parties, his actions would serve the interests of the nation as a whole, and this is guaranteed by the existence of a mechanism that may question or judge what he does. So I have no idea whether they tear him up or not; it depends on the developments of the political situation in a revolutionary situation, or in a counter-revolutionary situation, I do not know what is possible in these days, any type of head of state could be ripped apart, and in a consolidated situation even a weak head of state could manage, as far as I can see, just about anything can happen in politics.

What has been raised by comrade Szabó is one of the key issues in the debate. Are we able to win the majority at the elections to be held in a year or two with this structure, with this political burden on our back, with what is behind us, in this atmosphere we have been pushed into, and pushed into also by ourselves? This was the main question at the committee meeting on Friday as well. What I say is that the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party is still strong enough to win the majority even in such a situation. And if it is unable to do so, then the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party will not be a governing party, then it will be in opposition.

(Interruption: Is it really that simple?) No, it is much more complicated than that, I just cannot give you a more complicated answer. Because it will be determined by life itself.

Because the big question is whether a change of government, a change of structures would mean a change of social structures as well. A change of social structures would result in a civil war in Hungary. And it is very difficult for me to imagine that there is any considerable force in Hungary today that would intend to set such a civil war as a goal, or that would take on the responsibility of civil war. Because I believe there will be no intervention here either from the East or from the West. There is going to be a pot here with the lid on, inside of which we will have to give birth to our own answers, but there will be a catastrophic explosion then. I am convinced of it, since there is indeed a force which would be able to and also would want to take up arms to prevent political transition. But there is no need to take up arms to change the structure of governing, it should be sufficient to use political methods to accomplish it.

Therefore I can only see the possibility of political transition through an agreement of the various political forces, and not through political struggles, although for an agreement you need at least two sides who intend to agree, so political struggles cannot be excluded altogether, or else no agreement can be reached. I do not think it is guaranteed that all those mushrooming parties are willing to agree on what the MSZMP wants to. But it depends on our sense of reality whether we are able to find the right partners to form a coalition with, in order to win the majority where the main groups of society could be retained. This must be openly discussed in clear terms at the session of the Central Committee as well – what 'technology' can be applied to manage this process.

So I do not think it is simple and I do not want to make it look simple either, but I am afraid it is not really worth making predictions concerning this today. Because I consider our style – illustrated with the concrete example – and also the style of our political partners and opponents in their recent debates with us to be temporary. It is not possible to permanently stay in politics with a style like that. Today's *Magyar Nemzet* has printed the various groups'... I mean it is very interesting to see who signed it, the Wallenberg Society to begin with, and all the rest who are the most competent to take a position in this respect. But [also] the style is apparently changing to a certain extent. So now there is a reciprocity in politics, and I do believe it is possible to create a circle of partners that might guarantee for the MSZMP to maintain the leading position we have envisaged. I see the retention of our leading role not only in the number of members, but most importantly in our policies and the presence of the forces supporting those policies. And if I want to be totally objective, I am not so sure that we have a majority in Parliament at the moment, on the basis of the proportion of 75%. The most recent debates have not indicated that we had, to say the least.

Concerning what has been raised by comrade Tatai: the proportion of continuity and renewal. I think one of the mistakes of the base study is that contrary to the decision it has not analysed the past thirty years, but it goes back to 1945. I will talk about it when there is an opportunity, but I do not think I have to do it now. The decision of the Central Committee refers to 30 years and not 40 years. It was us who considered the 40 years during our debates here, and not the Central Committee. There was a clear concept behind it then. Now I know that those who were talking about 40 years had a different concept, they just did not want to say so. Because when the proposal was made concerning the 30 years, the intention was to talk about the period after '56. Because I think the rejection should not start with the period prior to '56 or with the events of '56, but with the period following '56 instead. It is in these 30 years that I can see the elements which may represent continuity and the elements we need to reject as well. We need to reject these in order that we may have a good, constructive programme for the next 10-15 years.

All this has been confused in the debates. It got confused in people's minds, in the party. To my mind, the denomination "popular uprising" is very spectacular, very attractive, but it is irrelevant as far as future is concerned. What is significant for the future is the critical analysis of the 30 years the mistakes of which have brought us into this situation, today's situation, the consequences of which are going to be with us for at least ten years. That is why I think the most important thing is to reject the mistakes committed in the past thirty years. This document lacks that. That is what I meant by saying it does not draw the political lesson.

It may not be the task of the Historical Sub-Committee, I do not want to be unjust. All I am saying is that this document is only a single phase of this whole issue; we need further analyses that study the past and refer to the future and straightforwardly reject the mistakes of the past 30 years. I wish this confusion had never occurred, but by now this has become a political practical issue; our views are apparently rather divergent also, it was naivety that had prevented me from finding that out earlier. That is to say, I would like to break with the mistakes of the past 30 years and I am not really interested in the period before that, I don't think it is important for us. Primarily because in my opinion if a country and a party are in a situation like this, they should look ahead and not backwards. That is all I wanted to say as a reaction to the responses. Please, comrades, comment. Comrade Pozsgay and then comrade Nyers.

Imre Pozsgay: I agree with the orientation of the draft. I also agree with the responses comrade Grósz gave to the questions, except for the one about continuity, but I think in the consultation phase (*Károly Grósz: we will talk about that*) we will discuss that, we really should. I would also like to make a few comments in the spirit of agreement.

The first is that the decision of these issues is not a legal problem, therefore I agree with presenting it as a current political issue in the Central Committee. I have tried to find out why we have not manage to create pluralism along with the single-party system, which seemed possible on the May party meeting, I think that is why it figures in the decision like that. I agree with the document stating that we can manage to implement party pluralism, we can predict that, at least it is certain that we cannot reverse the events or the development, unless we are ready to use administrative tools. I can see as the main reason for us having been unable to establish single-party pluralism in the internal organizational limitations of the

party, and the ideological weaknesses flowing from it. We could only have produced pluralistic social movements along with the maintenance of the single-party system if the party itself had been suitable for this task, if its organization had facilitated the creation of the conditions for the freedom of forming platforms and had allowed social disputes to take place within itself, instead of being introduced into the political system from the outside, by other organizations, as it is happening now.

I would not like to speak too much about this, because we are through with it. I must, however, comment that our organizational framework and organizational form show an excessive level of resistance and immunity towards external initiatives and the different trends, making the situation of the party more difficult and less efficient

than it should be; making the party passive and defensive within society. In my opinion the emergence of the other parties is going to force the party to reconsider its attitude, it will make the party to revive even if some of the party-formations we are talking about are unrealistic. That is one thing I wanted to mention about the multi-party transformation of the model.

I also think that the biggest political issue is how the MSZMP can preserve its hegemonic position under the circumstances of party pluralism. I agree with those who, like comrade Grósz, comrade Németh and others, say that this problem cannot be resolved through legal declarations, especially not by a definition in the Constitution. There is no Constitution on earth that can preserve the hegemonic position of any party if the party's own members and social contacts cannot achieve that. Moreover, such a definition would only raise doubts in society concerning our abilities. Therefore I also say that we should aim at a hegemonic position and this is the mission of MSZMP, however, we should not use legal means to achieve it, it should be guaranteed in the first round through some kind of – and I utter the concept that some have called “agreement” at this point, however, I prefer to use the word “compromise”, but that is only a matter of usage – a compromise and we should face open competition only in the second round. To my mind that would be the best way of scheduling, but I think that is what the others have said also.

The question is, however, whether there is a realistic chance for a compromise. I can see a chance in the form of what comrade Grósz has called a change of style among our potential and possible partners. Because no reasonable forces want an explosion, whatever their political ambitions might be. And they certainly accept that there is no force which would be able to form a government apart from the MSZMP. They might be able to wipe it away with votes, but they cannot replace it with any other force which would be able to govern. That is an advantage and a disadvantage for us at the same time. It is a disadvantage, because the responsibility for all these 40 years is ours. That is the reason for our disadvantage concerning votes. At the same time it is an advantage that no one else has the experience, the ability to govern and the determination to set up a government in the middle of such a crisis. On this basis it is possible to come to a compromise with some of these fundamental political trends, no matter if they call themselves parties or not, we will be able to manage with them in the framework of a compromise. Concerning compromise, I would like to add that different political wishes can come up. Circumstances may require that the MSZMP as a big party enters into relationships with small, fractioned parties. That is also a possibility we should consider. And I suspect that in the first phase there will be a lot of hustle and bustle because a lot of people have political ambitions who may wish to achieve

their goals by forming parties, but the interest of the country is that two or three strong partners take responsibility for this country, some of them in the form of a coalition and the others in opposition. And here I would like to return to the issue of single-party pluralism, because in that case and only in that case, and I don't intend to shift the responsibility primarily on party organs and organizations, it is necessary to have stronger corporations. I mean the organizations of representation of interest should have been more powerful. They were, however, not in a situation which would have allowed that, which makes new parties a realistic development. The difference between a corporation and a party is that a corporation always openly has a single interest, and we have experienced that, while a party always admittedly represents the interests of the nation as a whole. That is to say, a party is always looking for solutions to all economic and political problems. In my opinion this partnership could be established like that.

As for guarantees, it is very interesting and important, there are a lot of different proposals from a lot of different sources, which are arranged in a logical order from the president of the republic through a second chamber to an institutional form of agreement between the parties. I am wondering... and I cannot decide, but I suggest you also consider that there are a lot of arguments for the hegemony of the MSZMP, however, we should not accept any guarantees that make the MSZMP passive in this respect. Like a guaranteed position of a ruler or whatever, set apart... I have also played with the thought to rule and not govern, in the way the Hannover house was defined once, but today I rather think that the MSZMP should take part in the competition for governing, instead of being a kind of sovereign, because that would mean sending down, sorry, the membership and making them passive.

I would have liked to make these comments to arrive at the conclusion that, concerning the electoral system, I think in the first round we should make an electoral law which supports a compromise and should enter the term beginning in '95 with a new electoral law reflecting competition. Thank you.

Rezső Nyers: I would connect the emergence of the problem which resulted in the necessity of our setting out towards party pluralism, as it is very correctly described in this document, with the economic situation. I think the relationship is strong.

It is not only the economic situation that can be identified as its source. Alternative groups have been expressing the political concepts of Hungarian society, primarily those of the Hungarian intelligentsia, which has not supported the monolith single-party system for a long time, which has always been a challenged concept: from a marxist point of view and from the point of view of socialism as well. These alternative groups, at the same time, have played a marginal role in Hungarian society so far, however, as the economic crisis deepened and we had difficulties in handling it, a bridge began to be established, which is not solid or finished yet, but it is being created between these specific main masses and the alternative organizations. We still have our bridge to these specific main masses, however it is becoming weaker and weaker. That is what the present situation is like more or less.

I think that in May we had been optimistic concerning the time and the manner of resolving the crisis. It can be seen that [the crisis] is deeper. I agree with comrade Grósz that it is not possible to exactly define when it can be resolved, but it will probably be by '95 or the beginning of the '90's that this crisis can be resolved, until then we are going to be a society managing a crisis, an economic crisis. The

question is for how long the political crisis will last. It must not last as long as the economic crisis, because that would cause a collapse and much sooner. That is to say, we must be able to resolve it, that is the startingpoint. At our party meeting in May, I am not quite certain that everyone was thinking in the same way about this, but probably there was some consensus in the sense that we all considered the Constitution to be important. It should be amended or a new Constitution [should be created], we were arguing about that, but I think the majority wanted a new Constitution. We were thinking, however, in excessively legal terms, and I agree with comrade Pozsgay, I think he has also mentioned that this cannot be resolved [merely] through legal action. It is a political act, and whether we want it or not, this is going to be renovation itself, that is to say, this is where continuity will be interrupted. It is also called economic constitutionalism, which is a strange expression, but there is something to it..., and [there is] political constitutionalism.

The bases of the social system will endure. And what are these bases? Well, the superstructure is certainly not the basis, this political system, this is not a basis. We will have to supersede Marx in a lot of things. [This is the] task of the period to come. I think that Marx's conception of the state is rather one-sided. We are advancing towards a completely different kind of state, we should be aware [of that]. (*Imre Pozsgay: It has been illusory.*) I would not say it has been illusory, because it has expressed the class character of the state, it has expressed an important aspect of the state by presenting the state as the product of the oppression of one of the classes, as its instrument against another. Let us take notice of the fact that we have already given up this view. There was some logic in what happened in Lenin's time when they quickly announced that the state was socialist, which made it possible for them to break with the whole philosophy of Marx. Well here..., but do not let us enter into this. All in all, the making of a Constitution has become a political act. It is with this document that it becomes a political act for the Central Committee of the party. That is my conception of it.

I am reading these thick documents in the government as well, sometimes I even enjoy them; a political system has failed because of this, I must say. Lawyers should study this, and it is very important and everything is very important, but we should see the politics in it and we have to make it into a political process.

I have an answer to the New March Front, to their proposal. It has good intentions, it is right in certain things, like when it is saying that these are insignificant people, I admit that, but it is using a legal argument against a political offer. [The argument] that legally it is impossible because Parliament has to declare it, well that is not what matters..., that March Front..., a proposal here as well..., this lawyer mentality comes to the front. Lawyers must have it, but we should not let ourselves be led by it too much politically.

Should we make a program until the congress or for a longer period? I think we should be thinking farther ahead, but it will be necessary to rethink everything at the congress. There is not much time until then.

According to me, as comrade Grósz and comrade Pozsgay have already said, there are two phases. It is the transitional phase, about which we do not know for how long it will last, that we should cut short. The transitional..., the phase of political transition. Economic crisis management will go on. But that is one phase.

The other phase is when party pluralism develops. I agree with declaring the necessity for party pluralism, however, there is some difference in the justification [as compared to my views], according to me, party pluralism is the natural state of

being of a strong people's democracy or of a socialist society or of one in transition towards socialism. Single-party system is a revolutionary condition, it is the natural state of being or political state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, while it also has several forms as we all know. That is my view, I would not be trying to explain why there is party pluralism. I would like to add, that since the fall of feudalism, since bourgeois society has existed, no single-party system could survive for long, because it does not provide enough mobility for social changes, well, that is all about that.

As for the hegemonic role, I agree with the essence of the hegemonic role, if we conceive of it as a leading or determining role. The expression "hegemonic" is not fortunate. I would not use it, because it is a concept used in relation to ruling. Gramsci used it and recently the Institute of Social Sciences fell in love with it, but they are also becoming less interested in it already. No, this does not [work] in Hungary. Because it conceals bringing back the principle of the single-party. In my opinion the meaning of this is that it should be guaranteed in the transition period – deliberately and through an agreement, that is, we should agree on the basis of a plan – that the MSZMP has to remain the main, the determining governing force. This is how I see it. Not alone, but sharing the responsibility and the power of governing with others. It should be discussed with who.

In the first phase, in the transitional phase, in my opinion, there should not be competing parties. If a competition between the parties starts before a certain degree of economic consolidation [is reached], that can lead to social unrest and a durable loss of peace. I am saying it with full responsibility for the nation and the people and whatever. It cannot be competing parties only convening parties that control each other. It is, however, necessary that they control each other. Some would participate and we should also concede that there should be an opposition which not only controls the party but also criticizes it or the coalition culturally. That should also be allowed. That is the transition period.

And I think it is absolutely necessary to have parties competing after the transition. That is all about that. I think the second chamber is an important possibility for us to ensure the leading, governing role of the MSZMP in a civilized form, which is somewhat in accordance with democracy as well. There are democratic systems that have incorporated this leading role and in this way we would not have to include it in the Constitution. Because it is not possible, either. Therefore I agree with comrade Grósz that we should keep this in mind and analyse it during the discussion to see how we can formu.. how we can exploit it.

Finally, I think that before the period of the negotiations, immediately before we should define our policy for this short transitional period. Only for the transition; no big strategies, just to see what we want. Because everybody is talking about strategy, while I think no one has an idea among the alternatives, either, of what a strategy can be in Hungary. Neither do we. So let us agree in what we should do and how we should do it during this transition period... we must define ourselves at the level of slogans. At the level of slogans and then let them argue, those who say these are only slogans, let them say what they have which is more than a slogan. They have nothing else, either.

The way we should define ourselves is to say that in today's Hungarian society the party is not of everyone, but whose is it then, whose interests does it represent? We cannot say it is of the working class because that way it is not clear for people. We should find out something, I also do not have anything suitable in

mind. We cannot say it is of the people, because what is the people? Péter Veres has already told us what he thought the people were when he was already beginning to get disappointed in them. So we cannot use it. Well, it is common people, we are the party of common people. Something like that. "The party of those living on wages" or "of the employees" is also not good. That is not good, either. But it is not true that we can be the party of the intelligentsia. That is not true, either. That is an illusion. We only have to be in alliance with the intelligentsia, we cannot permanently be their party. Common people can somehow feel that, I think that is what the party should... Let us define our policy as minimalizing the burdens of the crisis that affect common people. They really should be minimalized. Then we will say where can it be seen in practice? And then we must go into it, and yes, that is really what we are doing but it does not go very well. Kádár and his men were doing the same. Unfortunately they were doing it so badly, that Hungarian society does not appreciate it that while they were upsetting the whole system of production, they were defending common people incredibly. Their attitude was deeply socialist but also deeply apolitical and bad. That is my opinion. Now we must go back to that point, but not in the way Kádár and his men were doing it. That is one thing.

Concerning public property. I think that the expression "the dominance of public property" as it figures in the text is not really fortunate, or it is not satisfactory, it is not exact, because it can also be interpreted in a way that public property is dominant in all industries, branches and spheres of economy. That is not right. It is damned certain that it will not be dominant in services, that public property will not be dominant in consumer services and in other areas it also may not be, we do not know it yet, but maybe not in retail trade, either. I think we should put it in a way that the concept of mixed economy is implied and it should be included that the dominance of public property should be maintained in crucial areas of the people's economy. We can argue about what the crucial areas are, but these are well-known and existing expressions. That is all I wanted to say about public property.

I would say that opening towards world economy is a goal that should receive priority in the programme. We must include social-political, health-care and social security ideas even if we are in an unfavourable situation. We must renew the idea of the strong and stable forint, which is the same as convertible forint. We just should not produce the illusion that we can make it. It should be presented as a process which would take years, but it should be set as a goal. We should take on setting out a new course of economic development along with the political and economic foundation of local governments and we should take on their expansion also. So we should elaborate a programme like that. We cannot do it by the time of the Central Committee [meeting] but it can be done in a very short time, we should indicate that we are working at it. This way we can make the alternatives be compared to us.

We also have to set a goal of international politics. I cannot tell what that should be, but it could be the disintegration of the blocks or something like that, we might say that the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party is for that, that it is working at it together with certain forces of the international communist movement. Or maybe even with the CPSU. We should not be shy about that, the main thing is "down with blocks". If we only say that we want that..., well, it is not a new idea, but it would immediately sound impressive. Something like that as a program.

Finally, the question arises that when comrade Grósz presents this program it will be impressive and later we can arrange these elements into a politics of finding the way out [of the crisis], but how can the membership of the party join in? That is my question. We should do something like having the basic units discuss it very urgently. Something like it. I would not be afraid of making it public if we finalize it. Let it sweep through the country and let all alternative movements see it. Those who have good intentions will not repine at it. Those who have bad intentions can repine that the communist steamroller is on its way. But it is setting out with a programme for a good cause and let the kind of László Czoma go to hell.

And there should be no... because the next big question is who should remain in this party. Because these uncertain people, these weather-cocks... already in Parliament, you are right, everybody is talking about weather-cocks and they are the biggest ones and now they are legislating, so let us get rid of them. We cannot announce that, but we should include members of parliament in this, we should give a free hand to each one that is a party member. Let everyone find his or her place and only those should remain party members who feel that they belong here. With this step I think we would not desintegrate but we would be consolidated, because I hope that a decisive core has played a central role and it would remain [with us] in Parliament. Thank you.

Miklós Németh: I agree with the last part of the proposal. I also suggest that we should initiate a discussion about this conception in this form, as an indication, even if it is not fully developed yet, the conception that the party is definitely striving for creating a platform which pools central forces within a very short time, without giving up the main goals of the programme of stabilization – because we cannot give those up for reasons of external judgement. If we cannot do that, we will not be able to realize our intention to have hegemony during the period of transition, either. Therefore I suggest that this material should be reviewed on the basis of that discussion after the meeting of the Central Committee and... well, if it is send off, then... I have not seen yet... then there is no way to modify it only after the meeting of the Central Committee. (Károly Grósz: *The members of the Political Committee did not receive any, because they did it concerning the meeting of the Political Committee, they only had a note on the CC package.*) Well, I did not read that note. I would also like to confirm that and I vote for... we have started to work on a programme like that in the government as well, and it would be useful if this material was supported and reviewed and maybe comrade Grósz's speech would also serve that purpose in an edited form. That is to say, we should not be secretive, should not close ourselves off, but go on with what we have been doing so far; let us remain open and not display the old... do not let others think we are scared.

I think my question already implied that I can detect the base-superstructure theory in the logic of this document, I think that this conception runs through it. In the current situation, however, I think that this base-superstructure approach is absolutely useless. It also misguides the evaluation of the situation, correction can be made here and there but... As a characteristic example of that, I would like to quote the introductory paragraph of page one, which says that “the basic reason for that is economic”. Well there is some basic reason in the economy, but back in November '86 we were already of the position that it is not merely a reason but a consequence first of all, and that it was the problems of a model that surfaced in the economy. I disagree with the view that the main reason for the crisis is the economy.

The crisis appeared in the economy as a consequence and then chains of cause and effect developed.

Therefore I suggest that we delete these points after the debate is carried out. With the conception that we should confirm what has been said about the two periods of transition. I also think it would be very dangerous for us to enter into a competition in the first period of the transition. It would shift... I think the main problem is that the attention has been shifted from the production, from the tasks in the economy, because I see that it is discussed even at the working machines, and recently it has been talked about here and there, and it is very dangerous if it is going on like this. "Aiming at a hegemonic role", well, we should really forget about this word, we might say dominant or leading or something like that (*Interruption: determining*). Determining then, whatever, but we should forget about hegemony, because it will be interpreted as bringing back old-time reflexes, while our main goal is to supersede the monopolistic and monolythic power model – and I use both words on purpose – that is to say, to prevent Stalinist restauration by creating the institutions of constitutional and legal guarantees.

Well, during the transition^l period, once the party law is enacted, the organizations will have to decide how they react. Probably they will only now be faced with the fact that they have to step forward from the period of criticism and rejection, that is why it is important that the party produces the broadly defined elements of a program. Because we may succeed in splitting them up in the sense that there will be some that want to proceed together with us and undertake compromise and public consensus. The real responsibility will come when they also try to create their overall programs and party structures, this feverish period of the honey-moons is probably over. I am convinced that this is part of the reason for a change of style, they are beginning to realize the difficulty of what they are striving for, therefore we do not have to be afraid of parties being established fast. We should probably reach a model where there is not more than two or three stronger parties apart from the MSZMP. A lot of organizations can become minor satellites, but they will not have any mass base because so many kinds of interests cannot be represented in a marked way for them to become parties with considerable mass bases. [...]

In relation to the transition, [I would like to say a few words concerning] the timing of the elections. We should think it over and maybe there is enough time until the meeting of the Central Committee, or it can be communicated in the speech that two positions can really be experienced within the party. Let me tell you, that I am also uncertain and it depends on a lot of factors whether we are going to be consolidated by '90, by the elections in '90 or we will be even weaker. That is to say, we should consider whether we should bring the elections forward and use, as many of you have said, not legal guarantees or the legal system itself but civilized and democratic solutions for ensuring our leading role. Several people say, and I think they are undoubtedly right, that it would be better to target the end of the year and prepare the new electoral law referring to the transition period together with the Constitution, and hold the elections then. Others are for the original schedule, that is, they see stronger guarantees in the elections being held in '90. [...] Thank you. Please, go ahead.

István Szabó: Honourable Political Committee! I agree with the document. It is certainly going to lead to big disputes. When saying so, I also do not conceal that it

is very difficult for me to agree, but I was convinced by paragraphs one, two, three... five of the next page, which says that "for different reasons it has become an unavoidable reality in Hungary to switch over to party pluralism" and God forbid that I prevent it by administrative or any other means. [...] I also do not want to induce any kind of mood, but we are sometimes accused of... and not only by orthodox party members, of being a Central Committee or better a Political Committee which aims at liquidating its own party. This is a very rough way to put it, and it is exactly for this reason that I say it, because we cannot ignore these opinions without taking notice of them as they are [...].

Because we are divided, well, we have observed it so many times already that nothing..., but if we cannot make order in the party with the program suggested by comrade Nyers, comrade Németh, which would be very necessary, and we must prove the opposite even if it is going to be difficult and will take a few years..., that we do not want to liquidate or destroy the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, we do not want that. [...]

In order not to say generalities and to show that I take it seriously, this reform, I will give the example of comrade Vastagh, who was elected there. I could say the names of more people in that party committee in Szeged, but well, we should help this political centre get out of the university. Because the power centre there is not at the party committee or the local council but at the university and these cases support the view, which I think is not correct, that the Hungarian Socialist Party wants to be the party of the intelligentsia only. There are similar signs in Debrecen and there might be in other cities as well. [...]

[...]

Mihály Jassó: [...] The first thesis is pluralism. I would like to expand on this. I can see in it the essence of a political debate, not in the sense of how pluralism developed from interests through views and ideologies to policies to go through it, but here it is narrowed down to the issue of political pluralism. Well that is too narrow, and today a crucial aspect of the debate is the pluralism of power and we have to say something about that at the meeting of the Central Committee. We must say if we consider political pluralism to be possible or we are talking about sharing the institutional system of power, because the notion of a bridge, an alliance between the parties has been raised; I am convinced that political pluralism has not existed for long anywhere.

It is certainly possible to make an alliance for power, but that one which is made for a certain kind of power, which is not plural; and it is possible to make the legal instruments and forms of power – like Parliament, the president and courts – stand on more than one feet, it is possible to share the functions of exercising power, but this issue should be settled somewhere. The issue of whether we want pluralism of power or not. Because at the moment parties or formations have started to fight for power, it is going on, we may be able to avoid the competition between the parties and we may not. Because it is possible that they will not want to form a coalition with us but with each other against us; this is only a guess, but it is true that if we are strong they would want to make an alliance with us, and if we are weak, with each other against us. But that is a question of power somehow and we should discuss the issue of the pluralism of power and we should clarify it because it also produces political debates. In relation to the wording, I would like to call your

attention to the fact that we have never intended to create or to admit pluralism but to manage it, that is to say, it is not a goal of the party, but it is a fact, well now..., we do not have to acknowledge this..., the problem is that we did not realize the existence of differences of interests and views. All in all, we have to manage pluralism.[...]

[...]

Imre Nagy: I would like to start out from the idea mentioned by comrade Németh, he used the words: “council of national consensus” and I would say that it would be timely and necessary to set up a “Hungarian Roundtable” on the model of the “Polish Roundtable”. And the party should initiate it. I have no illusions either about this having short term results, as comrade Berecz has said, and by short term I mean weeks or months, because others are not prepared for it either. When I say “others are also not”, I mean that the party is not, either. This dispute must take place in the party, the Central Committee cannot decide by itself. At the same time, I would consider it important that we turn to the public with this idea, it would be an initiative.

I also agree that it would be necessary to establish a compromise for the transition period. The real question for me is what kind of trustworthiness the party needs to start with in order to establish the suitable conditions for a compromise. Because our plans, which we plan to realize are unprecedented in the history of Eastern European socialism. I think that one of the preconditions is to face the past, which is already on its way, I think it will be all right. The other is to declare clearly and consistently, what we think the goal of the transition is. We have not formulated that exactly yet. It is obviously impossible to formulate exactly as a model, but when we use the expression “socialist political pluralism” we are not referring to an accurately defined concept. I think that the party should declare that after a transition period it wants an open political competition with all of its consequences.

What does that mean for me? On the one hand, a competitive party pluralism. On the other hand, declaring that parties are legally equal. With all the consequences of that statement, because if parties are legally equal, then the MSZMP cannot have a Workers' Militia if other parties cannot. For me that does not mean the disbanding of the Workers' Militia, but its dissociation from the party. It also means that the situation of only the party and the KISZ (Association of Communist Youth) being allowed to organize within the army is untenable, and a host of similar questions should be taken on in the period after the transition. But we must declare and announce these things today if we want to sound authentic when we would like to negotiate about the transition and to come to a compromise. The issue of infrastructure belongs here as well. At Hungarian Television a film is being prepared about the facilities parties used to have in Budapest and what these are used for today. Apparently with the intention to imply things.

The third thing which should be declared is... and it refers to the period after the transition, is something several of you have mentioned in this room: that the MSZMP conceives of competitive political pluralism in a way that if it loses the democratic elections, it cedes power and goes into opposition. The party has not declared that yet to society. I think declaring all these things would provide the trustworthiness for us to be able to negotiate about the transition and to do our best that this does not happen, that the MSZMP might not lose the elections. I also agree

that we should not use the expression “hegemonic”, because it can be misunderstood, although I have further problems with the wording. The document says that it is a goal in itself for the party to *preserve* its hegemony. Several of you have said so and I agree that the goal is to *achieve* it. Today we do not have hegemony. Not even if we use other attributes like determining or any other one. Today we are in power.

I think that if we also talk about the rules of the game of the situation after the transition and about how we conceive of it as mandatory for ourselves as well, and if we face the past frankly, the MSZMP can have a suitable basis, a permission to enter and trustworthiness for its participation in the council of national consensus to come to a compromise about the transition period. I believe in it because the other social forces are not prepared for this competitive situation, either. All are in need of organizing and developing themselves as well. They need some time for that, you can see it on the Hungarian Democratic forum and every other initiative. The party also needs time. We can agree in that.

I [also] think that this period can have two stages. But I do not think the border between the two would be the congress, I think it is going to be the next elections. Although obviously these two will not be too far apart in time. I would, however, link the change to the elections instead of a party event. Concerning the proposals for guarantees the MSZMP can have for the transition period. I think that each one is good and can be realized. According to me, the most important is to introduce the institution of the head of state the soonest possible – even before the new Constitution – and to hold the elections. I am convinced that the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party has the strength to win the elections, and to win them with an absolute majority. [...]

[...]

János Lukács: [...] If we accept our earlier positions, position, which we had been emphasizing until recently, namely, that it is not socialism which got into a crisis but the model according to which we exercised power, then it is clear to me what kind of power we need to consolidate, preserve and fight for. Socialism... when talking about the next point on the agenda... the party cannot give way to doubts in this respect even in the sense comrade Nagy mentioned it that if we lose, we will be in opposition. Like that I... I am not afraid of the word, but I would not raise the issue like that. I think we have a few possibilities before that and of course I also do not think of the use of force. [...]

My view of that is slightly different. Our startingpoint should be to define what the transition is going to be like, because that still largely depends on us. I agree with comrade Németh. It is a fact that the MSZMP still has some possibilities to define the way a conceivable and managable policy can express genuine and widely relevant interests, and to what extent we give way to interests that can be organized into parties. [...]

Concerning hegemony and the leading role. I vote for the leading role. I think that during the transition the question of consensus depends on how our partners relate to this leading role. It is not necessary for all of them to accept it but a crucial element of the relationship would be whether or not they accept the leading role of the MSZMP. Because so far I think these potential parties or organizations have not defined themselves as marxist, etc. I do not want to involve myself in

theoretical considerations, because that would be a divergence to discuss whether – if we as the only Marxist-Leninist party lose the elections, and cede our position to somebody else – whether it would be possible to build socialism without a Marxist-Leninist party or without the leading role of such a party. From this respect the question is too complicated, it cannot be resolved. I am for emphasizing and taking on the leading role. I also do not like the wording used in the document, I would say instead that we are suitable, because we take the responsibility. That is what it is about and there is more to it, comrade Pozsgay has already mentioned it. We have political and civil service experience, we are a well organized force, which can mark us out for carrying on with this role. Thank you.

[...]

Károly Grósz: [...] I consider this period of equal rank to those between '45-'48 and '50-'60. It only manifests itself differently. Therefore I think any impatience, contradiction or dispute is unavoidable in this period. These are the pains of giving birth; if this movement will be able to bridge it without tragic conflicts, we can say it has created something valuable.

Another thing: I do not think party pluralism would be an unavoidable development, even if practice so far has not provided examples of party pluralism, better to say, the single-party system having been able to deal with social problems with due respect. I think the history of socialist practice is too short for us to be able to draw reasonable conclusions.

Concerning reasons. It is true that the introduction is one-sided because it derives the problem from the economy, however, there is interaction between..., I have been convinced for a long time, that we have started to dismantle the superstructure of the Stalinist model and we have been unable to create a constructive model to replace it. We built everything on the personal qualities of a few people; from this respect I consider at least twenty out of the past thirty years to have been missed, because we did not pay attention to this, while the international and social and internal economic circumstances were very favourable indeed. I say twenty because we passed the first ten years under tragic circumstances, recovering from a political and social tragedy and with the movement trying to finding its spiritual self and organizing itself. After that, however, we had an excellent opportunity, which – we can admit it calmly in retrospect – we missed. That is what I see as the fundamental reason for today's crisis. I think this crisis developed under the circumstances of the single-party system due to this way of thinking, and it would have developed under the circumstances of party pluralism in the same way with this mentality. If we had not established a functioning multi-party structure. There are a lot of countries with "Potomkin-parties", where not a single party but a few leaders define what should happen, if I can trust my experience.

Elections. I think no elections should be brought forward. I do not think power relations would change in weeks or months. I would like to comment here that I do not agree with the conviction that our leading role does not prevail at the moment and all we have is our power position. Because emotions should not be confused with political processes. Today it is emotions that dominate, veiling political processes and real power relations. I think that emotional elements would determine the result of the elections today, but in reality they will be determined by real power relations. I do not think it would be justified to bring the elections

forward either, because I do not think it would be correct toward other parties. I consider Szentágothai's comment he made during his speech in Parliament to be a warning. I did not like the speech itself, but I appreciate its intellectual value. The comment was that it might be our tactics to place our potential opponents in a difficult situation at the elections by passing the party law later. If he thinks so, others may think so, too. If we begin to push for earlier elections, there would be no way that we could deny that we are doing it in order that our opponents cannot pull themselves together. I think our moral basis would be hurt by that, and I do not think we would be so weak that we could not face this [delay]; we must get our party into a good shape. [...]

[Subject:] **Proposal concerning the concept of the new Constitution**

György Fejti: Dear comrades, the proposal which has been distributed is quite long, so there would be no excuse for giving you a lengthy introduction, therefore I would only like to call the attention of the Political Committee to a couple of points, the first of which is that we have arrived at a significant dividing line in the work related to the Constitution. We have to discuss the regulatory conception of the new Constitution at the present stage of its development to make it possible for quite a few details to be further elaborated on. And I would like to call your attention to a dilemma right away, the interconnection of the whole and its parts. There is a mutual iteration process here, if I can use this expression, because the parts have to be derived from the whole, and then the whole has to be put together from the more elaborate parts. I think it also means that when the main concept is accepted, numerous significant sub-questions will have to be included on the agenda of the Political Committee and perhaps on the agenda of the Central Committee as well. When the debate is over in the Central Committee, we will put together a schedule detailing those really significant sub-questions to be later elaborated and accepted.

The second issue is: what kind of a constitution do we want? Or, rather, the overt or covert question is whether there is a danger now in the work concerning the Constitution that we would constitutionalize the quite chaotic circumstances of the present, putting an end to the healthy, organic development of events – and whether there is another threat, also voiced sometimes, that we would give green light to a silent bourgeois restoration through our work which may be precise but would still be based on the bourgeois model. I do not intend to spend too much time on this issue. It is quite obvious that the domestic political situation is far from ideal for our work concerning the Constitution, to put it mildly. At the same time, we do have to carry on with our work, and I think both threats are possible to avoid if we record certain basic principles more unambiguously and definitively, than is prescribed in the first part of this proposal; I have in mind things like that.

Our starting point must be that we have to create a Constitution which clearly defines Hungary as a free, democratic, and socialist state. The fundamental values that can be preferred in this respect should be included in the chapter called “The Social, Political, and Economic System”. I have to add that this is the least developed part of the concept of the Constitution, but I do not think jurisprudence is to be held responsible for it. Probably persons who are more... skilled in political science and political ideology, if you like, and more capable of putting our research into words should join the team. I would think this is another part of the plans which is in need of further elaboration.

Another issue is the foundation on which we have to build this new concept of the Constitution. I would like to clearly identify two sources, and set the combination of the two as the source of the new Constitution. One is the whole historical process of the development of the Hungarian Constitution from which we have to use the elements that have stood the test of time, including the relevant parts of the Constitution of 1949. We have to think in terms of the Hungarian constitutional continuity in which the Constitution of 1949 represented a wide gap. So this dilemma has to be resolved. We will have more than one opportunities to do so. And the other thing is that we should borrow the progressive elements of the constitutional developments of Europe and the world that can be adapted in the conditions of Hungarian socialism today.

Finally, we should put more emphasis on the fact that we have to develop a constitution which guarantees stability, that is, in this transitional phase of development its purpose should be to provide a legal framework for the long run, it should be meant to last, it should not only fit the present circumstances but also the changes that can be anticipated. It is quite obvious that all these aspects are really difficult to reconcile – the current concept does lack consistency to a certain extent.

I would like to briefly note two other things. One is that the process of development of the new Constitution should be characterized by striving for consensus, so its mechanism should reflect, or rather its mechanism should continue to reflect that the debate and the referendum are strengthening the unity of the nation above all; and all this will take a long time. We must not keep ourselves back from calm and patient debates; haste is undoubtedly harmful in this process. I only mention this because we have already seen the signs of hurry. It has been stated that a constitution should be produced by December. I would not swear to it that a sophisticated constitution can be put together by December. Of course we have to try to finish the work by then, but I would also warn of the dangers of haste that would later have negative effects for sure. So, if the Constitution is really intended to be a force which facilitates consensus, it cannot be arranged with a simple majority vote. In the phase of preparations we will have to make great efforts in order to ensure that the Constitution provides a solid legal framework for the development of society.

Finally, I would like to point out that we should be aware of the fact that this concept of regulation will produce a lot of new issues to be debated by society as soon as it becomes public. It cannot be avoided, but it would still be very important to give more focus to the debates than in the case of the debates of the previous bill. In order to accomplish it, it is necessary mostly for the leadership of the party, but also for the active officials of the party, to achieve a relative unity in respect of the basic questions. Because if it does not happen, going public with the document and possible reactions to it might give rise to serious confusion.

The first political test of this document is the present occasion, and when we have been over with it, we should think about the next steps; it is also a question whether the Political Committee accepts the schedule which makes it possible for this document to be discussed in Parliament on March 8. I do not want to go into the problems, the risks of this schedule before the debate, we will see afterwards whether we should keep it or not.

Just a couple of practical remarks. In general, we think it is quite reasonable to keep the alternatives open, but there are a few issues where it is more disadvantageous to do so. I think the possible debate on the form of government is such an issue. I do not think there could be a more accurate and clear-cut phrase than “people's republic”, but it may result in rather emotional reactions and in the false interpretation of our intentions.

Another issue like that is the one concerning death penalty, the decision whether [there should be death penalty] – in the name of the right to live. I personally agree with what is written down – society is not prepared for a debate on this issue. So it is a question whether it should stay in there as it is. I should point out here that in certain countries referendums are held to decide things like that, and prior to the referendums a debate is going on for a year or one and a half years. I do not think this is a significant issue in domestic politics in Hungary these days, and I do not think that it is possible to reach public consensus in it.

I suggest what has been written down here in connection with the parliamentary elections should be disregarded by the Political Committee, since it needs to be re-considered on the basis of the discussion we have just had about the previous point on the agenda. It should be excluded, it should be taken out of the current version of the concept of the Constitution, and we will have to include some additions. I would like to point out that the proposition concerning the issue of the possible creation of a second chamber as it is included in this document is not the result of an unwillingness on the part of its compilers to consider the potential advantages of a second chamber. Our conclusion is that, as we are not fully aware of the political intentions in favour of the establishment of a second chamber in terms of what its contents, its method of introduction, and its function would be, on the basis of the information at hand we can find more arguments against it than for it, but this question can be left open, and we can make another effort to study the issue of the second chamber.

The part on the judicial and prosecutory organizations is quite detailed. I agree with what is written down, and I do not think we need to put it up for extensive debate. It should rather be the subject of a professional, internal discussion in order to preserve the stability of these important institutions in these chaotic times. I am of the opinion that we do have to pay attention to this issue, but there is no need to put it up for national debate, it should rather be the subject of a narrower, political-professional discussion.

And finally – I assume the discussion on national symbols will provoke intense emotions, so it would be quite useful to put a limit on certain versions and avoid an emotionally heated debate concerning national symbols, mainly the coat-of-arms, by taking the lead and expressing our preference, and implementing it in practice in advance. I am sorry, but yesterday I thought these additional remarks would be useful, but I am not so sure now, seeing it is 13.00 hours already.

[...]

Károly Grósz: [...] One thing I would like to point out concerns the form of government. I think we should not discuss the name like this. I suggest the phrase “people's republic” should be included in the distributed material as well. This can be a sensitive point and I think we have no reason to include it in the debate within the party, especially today, when there is so much talk about the people. So I suggest we should modify it in this respect. It is important for us to say that the views on the party expressed in this document are supported by the Political Committee and the Central Committee, because this is what gives its political importance. We have to take a firm position on this, we cannot leave it open. That is, that the party does not strive for a hegemony guaranteed by law. It flows from the discussion we have just had; within the party we will have problems with it, so at the session of the Central Committee and at

the session of the first secretaries of counties we will have to present all its aspects in detail.

I may not entirely understand it, but on my part I will always argue if free disposition of property includes the right to alienate public property, as it is outlined on page 15., in relation to the rights of the subjects of economy. Because we are then confronted with the un-resolved issue that we have always regarded public property as the dominant element in the structure of a mixed economy, and as one of the most important features of socialism – you cannot say the only important feature, but one of the most important ones. I may be misunderstanding something, and it may be arranged in another way, but it will be the subject of a very passionate debate, and we have to take a clear position on this. [...]

As one of the speakers now, I would like you to note that I still think we should carefully consider the two-chamber system. The document has not convinced me that it would be superfluous. I know there have been objections to it right from the beginning. I said then what I am saying now, and what we have written down in connection with the previous document, that the second chamber in a two-chamber system would be a safety valve in the changing times of political transition and of the creation of the new political institutions, in other words, the creation of a new socialist model. Based on the discussion we have just had, the transition will take several years, so it does not mean it would lose its significance in a couple of months, and consequently, building it into the system would not question the long-term validity of the Constitution, since it is quite possible to take out of the system when the new institutional structure is put in place, in ten years' time, in eight years' time, I do not know when. But until then it can be one of its elements even if it would slow down the mechanism of decision-making. To my mind its basic function is exactly the slowing down of decision-making, so it does not scare me at all, in fact that is why I would be personally quite content with it. That is what its basic function would be.

If the programs of legislation listed here – which look fine to me – are to be taken seriously, then I think we should alter the pace characteristic of our legislative work in the past year or one and a half years. Then the second chamber can act as a workshop of control, of social soberness, of careful consideration of affairs, as a tool of self-defence for the system which I think is reasonable to maintain.

As far as the president of the republic is concerned, I support the concept itself, but I know this is possible to interpret in a lot of different ways. At first sight the phrase “president of medium strength” strikes me as funny, but I have understood the intention (*Interruption: consistently tough*), I mean I understand it, and I like it, I think it is acceptable, it can be included in the system. The problem of the duration of his term of office arises here, six years or seven years, that is, and the goal here is obviously to avoid making it parallel with the parliamentary elections, because this is what would provide a certain continuity. Perhaps the one-year difference can be acceptable here, I know the practice in France is seven years, and I would think it is similar in other places, comrade Kulcsár knows more about it; a president of the republic might stay in office for quite a long time, so seven years is a possibility. But maybe a shorter term would mean greater freedom of action. A term shorter than five years, on the other hand, would perhaps question the weight of it... I do not really know, the seriousness of it might be questioned then, so I would prefer to have a somewhat longer election cycle [than that] of Parliament.

We will have to explain in connection with the activities of the president of the republic the sentence that he cannot hold a leading party office, or rather the sentence

that he should be “above the parties”. It should be explained because it will cause serious confusion everywhere. The main issue concerning this is that we do not question his being a party member, but rather his obligation to represent with his actions and decisions the interest of society as a whole, the interest of the nation, instead of party interests. Well, it needs further elaboration, because we are not used to this at all in practice, to put it mildly, and what is more, I can recall the time when the feelings of the president of the republic or of the president of the Presidential Council was rather hurt by the fact the he was not a member of the Political Committee. I happen to remember those times. So there is a great need to change intellectually, and we have to put a lot of energy into it. [...]

[...]

[Subject:] **Report on the major political experience at municipal and county conventions and at sessions of party committees**

[The Pozsgay-affair is discussed under this point – *Editor.*]

[...]

Károly Grósz: Comrades, as it was decided at the beginning of this meeting, we should devote some time to a comradely discussion on a substantial issue which is going to be on the agenda of the Central Committee as well. I do not think we have to make a decision here. So that is not our goal here. That is not the function of it. We do not have to develop a position here with which we have to work later on. But we do need to conduct an open, comradely discussion to let our different opinions clash, and if possible, come closer to each other, although this is not necessary either, we should just let them clash so that we would see how we live, what we think, to make the development of the desired political unity easier, first of all, among the leadership, but I think also in the movement. So I think we must not expect more of the discussion of this point, this is more than enough, and this is what fits most the request voiced by comrade Pozsgay at the last session of the Political Committee.

In terms of the method of discussion, my opinion is that the most practical thing to do would be asking comrade Pozsgay to outline his ideas and then we would join him; there is no need to give summaries, let the questions we are all interested in come out along the way, if you agree. Because I find this method the most comradely and the least rigid, now that our function around the table is not to make decisions. All right, go ahead, then.

Imre Pozsgay: Thank you. I have asked for this opportunity for a consultation, because I also intend to share my opinion concerning these issues at the session of the Central Committee. And, as comrade Grósz has said, where it is possible and reasonable, the viewpoints should be coming closer, and there should be no confrontation in this debate. Especially not inside of the Political Committee. For this reason I would like to point out, first of all, that since the last session of the Political Committee dealt with this side of the issues in quite a detailed manner, I would not like to talk about the problems associated with my person, and I accept that at the session of the Central Committee it should not be raised as “the Pozsgay-affair”, but as part of the discussion of the main point on the agenda. And of course I do not have any illusions; I know that

the members of the Central Committee will have remarks directed at my person, and reflections on my attitude.

So much to that. I would really like to talk about certain political issues instead, referring back to the work of the committee, since in connection with the first point on the agenda it has been already mentioned, the question of continuity, and comrade Grósz has read out the original decision that the task of this committee would have been the analysis of the past 30 years, but according to this document it went back 40 years. I have to add to this story that it was not just an idea out of the sky, it was brought up or forced out by the inner logic of things. And this is one of the things, the question of continuity, where I would like to ask for understanding, and if possible, agreement. Criticism based on the history of our whole system, on its relation to former ones, and on respect for values is logical only if it spans the whole era. Since it is easier to pick out of the whole era what is to be carried on, and it is also easier to find historical reasons for identifying the things that cannot be carried on.

In this respect, I would like to call your attention to one thing in the study, although I do not want to enter into a debate about the study, namely the fact that with the exception of Yugoslavia where a people's liberation war occurred, it is only Hungary out of all East-European socialist countries where it can be proven that a revolution was taking place at the turn of '44 and '45, in the rest of these countries only the form of government changed, or a simple change of government or change of regimes occurred at the time of their liberation. I do not want to talk about this in detail, but it is such a great value in our history that it would be a shame to forget it. For a long time, under Rákosi, it was impossible, since it was Rákosi and his regime who destroyed the institutions which had been created by this revolution. And later it became discredited and sensitive again because it was researched in detail by persons who were regarded as part of the opposition, for instance Ferenc Donáth, who carried out a very accurate and deep analysis of those times. I do not want to say more about this. Only that there are indeed these revolutionary values in the history of our system that can be taken on in the name of continuity.

As a consequence of that, the changes that happened and nationalization had a social character in Hungary between '47 and '49, especially after the merging of parties from the summer of '48 until March '49, until the reanimating of the People's Front, and then it was mainly Rákosi's oligarchy which destroyed all the elements of the proletarian dictatorship; that was when all the workers' movements were exterminated at the workplace and at the places of residence, simply everywhere. In the spring of '49 a Ministry of the Interior Decree was issued for that purpose, and unfortunately it was signed by János Kádár, but it was not a decisive factor, because it was Rákosi who pulled the strings all through this "gleichschaltung". There are proofs for this, indeed.

It is interesting from the point of view of evaluating '56 and the debate about it, because genuine people's institutions were created – this is Donáth's expression but I can identify with it myself, people's institutions, which were deprived by Rákosi and his men of their content and later of their institutional form.

And this is where the use of the term "popular uprising" becomes interesting in terms of relations with the Soviet Union. Putting aside the willingness to reach public consensus and the intention to agree on who likes this term and why, since I have not dealt with this earlier, I started to do so only in connection with the study, and also because it does not have an anti-Soviet edge, only an anti-Stalinist edge. It is acceptable like that and is in fact in accordance with the evaluation of the XXVIIth Congress of the CPSU stating officially on a party forum for the first time in the Soviet Union that the

Stalinist model was forced onto Eastern Europe. So this interpretation and evaluation are quite relevant and coincide with the interpretations at the XXVIIth Congress of the CPSU.

The next thing I would like to consider and maybe agree on its interpretation, is that the use of this phrase which does not carry an anti-Soviet meaning but is in fact anti-Stalinist and coincides with evaluations made elsewhere, satisfies in this respect all the people at the moment who are otherwise tacitly considering the radical phrases of "revolution", "national revolution" and "war of independence". Because one should examine the phrase in this triangle: counter-revolution, popular uprising, national revolution. In my opinion, this is the idea which helps the party to escape from the trap of a phrase that had been created out of contemporary political necessities, to escape without threatening its sense of identity and its self-respect, and without making it necessary to call the whole party to account retrospectively.

Let me also add to this, in connection with the use of this phrase, because it has been debated and comrade Németh has referred to it as well in his speech in the Chamber, and others, too, and also with reason, saying that we should not replace a one-word definition [*in Hungarian – the translator*] with just another one-word definition. This is, of course, quite true in the case of a scientific study; one is aware of the fact that a complex system can only be described with a whole net of categories, as prescribed by the laws of logic, but public consciousness always works out its one-word judgements on historical situations, and in this case we do not have to face scientific conclusions only, but also the possibility that it is called "revolution" again, excuse my words. This is the most important point in the whole issue, and we are in the last minute in respect of this, because there is quite a strong pressure in another direction. So this is not about rejecting the category of counter-revolution, but rather preventing its turning into simply "revolution" again. Public opinion polls are forecasting it, and we have to and we can alter the development of public consciousness in this way.

Putting this topic aside, I would still like to point out that resulting from misinterpretation a certain part of the party members and especially the ones who had been actively involved in those events due to their position or their principles, seemed to regard this conceptual shift in this case almost as a call against their lives and their sacrifices. I believe that among those concerned there are some people on whose part there have been exaggerations and political speculations. I cannot believe of some of them that they were doing it without any bad faith. Last night I agreed to a self-torturing adventure: I met 600 comrades in Marcibányi Square who had received the decoration "For the Socialist Homeland" or the decoration "For the Workers' and Peasants' State", and it turned out that it is this part of it which is disturbing for them personally, for their self-evaluation.

What I can say with good feelings is that after the wildly emotional mood induced by a couple of ringleaders, we could go home with the feeling that the majority have understood and accepted and tolerated us – and it was not possible to make them accept any disapproving decision, which had been prepared in advance, they said there was no reason for voting on it, things like that. I am telling this to you only because that was the environment where I really intended to find out what the questions were for the segment of the members about whom I had said that they were deeply affected, had brought sacrifices, which could give rise to misunderstandings.

And finally, although I do not want to repeat myself, it is the study as a whole which would explain itself. About the ensuing events – I have talked about it last week; who takes responsibility for what and who says what at the session of the Central

Committee is everyone's own business, but what I said in connection with this was not my personal conclusion and personal opinion, it was not my personal decision to make it public, but I agreed with each element and I took responsibility for them. This is also a part of the picture, and also that I know that the sober majority of the party members are, in fact, demanding that we should arrive at the stage of clearing things up at last in relation to this issue as well, and they are not inspired by impulses, but rather by the goal of stabilizing the situation of the party.

I am only telling you this for your information, and not because I like to boast about it, but I could realize in the presence of 3000 party activists in Hódmezővásárhely, where all the party activists of Csongrád county were under the same roof – and there is no reason for going into details and I do not have the right to do so, either –, how different it was from the convention in Marcibányi Square in spite of the fact that even in Marcibányi Square the whole thing ended with the reasonable decision that there was no reason for a political decision in relation with an issue like this. And I would like to finish this part of what I have to say: this is an issue which is impossible to avoid, and I am a stubborn Marxist in this sense, because Marx said that “the essence of everything is its history”, and if a movement cannot carry it out, it cannot have the trustworthiness we have been talking about in connection with the first point on the agenda.

And, finally, the publicity of it... of course the Central Committee will be the judge of that, and also the Political Committee, but the behavior of the MTI [*the Hungarian News Agency – translator*] was referred to in particular. Probably this is again an example of those control problems we have been struggling with for weeks now, because I did not give any guideline to the MTI that they cannot announce the position of the party. I do not know who it was, but I did not say anything to the MTI, that is for sure. Obviously, on the basis of the principles of the constitutional state, they decided that they can make public everything which is not classified, but I do not know anything about the facts or their background, I do not know who instructed the MTI to do anything. I only say this because comrade Grósz has mentioned that there was confusion again in terms of publicity, in terms of handling the public.

Finally, coming back now to the session of the Central Committee, and, naturally, asking for the impressions of the Political Committee on this, I would only note that as the agenda requires, I will consider what I have to say a part of a point on the agenda, just as it will be considered by the report, but I do have to account for these things in the Central Committee, so my colleagues here should not be surprised if I talk about it. The speaker will decide when I should speak and in what form, and I would like to prepare for this speech. The other thing in connection with the session of the Central Committee... well, I would rather ask for the opinion of the honourable Political Committee, well, I believe I cannot exercise self-criticism concerning this issue at the session of the Central Committee because I am of the opinion that it was a popular uprising. And I do not intend to do so. And my behavior should be judged by the Central Committee as they please. I will give my reactions to that on the spot. This is what I wanted to tell you.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: Do I understand correctly that comrade Pozsgay identifies with the train of thoughts in the study? That is, it was a rightful uprising of the people, let us call it “popular uprising”, against a political dictatorship, and I do not use this oligarchical

expression, because it is a high-flown phrase and I do not think it is accurate, but against a dictatorship that had turned against the working class. For the right goals, but against it. That is, on the one hand, there is a popular uprising, and at the same time counter-revolutionary and restoration efforts also surfaced in the process. So my question is whether he is willing to accept that? Because that is what is meant in the study. And then should we interpret what he said like that? But then it should be said like that, for the public's sake it needs to be simplified to a certain extent, because that is what he said, but he could only express it in a simplified way, that something new is happening here. Am I interpreting it correctly?

Imre Pozsgay: Well, this is the full and correct interpretation. This is what I said last week, and also on the radio. In that statement together with the idea that...

Rezső Nyers: Meaning good, as it were...

[...]

Imre Pozsgay: Yes, of course, this is how it should be understood. And let me add something else. Of course, we all know that defining the fundamental nature and course of a thing is rather different from talking about its characteristics. The whole study is talking about its characteristics – and I can identify with that. The statement was made in a radio interview; knowing the soul of the people and the psychology of society, no matter if they read it in a 100-page study or they hear it on the radio, everybody would read “popular uprising” out of it all the same. So this is the psychological aspect of it. That is why it was easily forgotten that in that 20-minute interview – it was not just ten minutes – I also referred to those points. I was also the first to say that it would be wrong scientifically to replace a one-word judgement with another one-word judgement. But the nature of the thing will be qualified as “popular uprising” anyway.

In connection with this I would also like to point out that the phrase “popular uprising” itself does not contain a value judgement in reference to revolution or counter-revolution – it could actually refer to either of them. Just as comrade Nyers said. When the stability of a country is upset and conflicts are stirred up and become open, it has never happened in the history of any country that the counter-forces and various other forces would not have showed up to grind their axes, and that the – how shall I put it – trash would not have been there as well. There has never been a popular movement without that happening if we think it over, even if the most sacred ones are recalled. The dirtiest mob was also there every time. It is part of the nature of it. (*Rezső Nyers: Imre, this is included in the study as well, but it is also there that the forces of restoration are not simply the mob.*) That is why I say that they were there, too, of course, they lived among us, they could have used a little collapse of society (*Rezső Nyers: Yes, we all know that.*) and they would have consolidated things quite differently from what Imre Nagy intended. (*Rezső Nyers: That is clear.*)

Still another thing. Just to give you an example of the honest effort of those on power to understand things – in Vásárhely I recounted the story of Kölcsey. I do not want to over-dramatize anything, especially not at the session of the Central Committee, but how it is possible to understand the people even if they behave like animals... Kölcsey, as the representative from Szatmár county at the Diet in Bratislava, demanded equality before the law, general and proportionate sharing of taxation, and emancipation of serfs. In the meantime back in Szatmár county the serfs were robbing the palaces,

they also set fire to Kőlcsey's home, they destroyed his crops, and he cried, and went back to the Diet and said once again: "equality before the law, general and proportionate sharing of taxation, emancipation of serfs". Well, it is possible to see a movement of the people like that even if it may be horribly violent in certain situations. Of course I meant to include these thoughts as well, but if I say that I identify with the study, then let the study speak for itself. I do not want to pass an examination in front of the Central Committee either in history or in anything else – they will be interested in my political affiliation anyway, and they will have to draw conclusions from that.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: In my opinion, in the case of a political party and a political movement, including the communist movement, it is quite possible to have differences of opinion between the members of the movement concerning its history or even concerning national history. Differences of opinion, mind you, but not opposing views. I do not think opposing views are possible, but significant differences should not be a problem. The decisive thing is to agree on the evaluation of a given political situation and on the actions required, and to agree on the program. That is my first point. And it is unusual. It is not a feature of bolshevik mentality. Well, God knows, it would be all right with the original bolshevism. It would be all right with Lenin. We just do not know enough of it, certain things are being unveiled just now. [...]

I would say it like this: I do agree with the expression of "popular uprising". I just do not agree with saying it with one word. We should qualify the expression. It will be a minor difference of opinion between us, and then it will be all right, other people should also say what they think, and then the members of the Central Committee will be able to picture a Political Committee which does have unity after all in terms of the general direction of its thinking, put together of corresponding and alternative voices. But it is united in terms of its policies.

Now, what comrade Grósz should say about it. We cannot demand of him either to exercise self-criticism. There was a slight difference... concerning the statement, it was not as sharp as it is seen to have been, especially by the alternatives, because they say it was just opposing. They also mention comrade Berecz in connection with this, but that is something else. They try to interfere with it, but there is a difference anyway. So let comrade Grósz hold on to his view as well.

After giving it some thought, I am still of the opinion I expressed last time that it was not really useful that comrade Pozsgay said it just like that then. I cannot really change my opinion on this. It was not useful. If this party swallows the bitter pill only because comrade Pozsgay was so very courageous as to say it, then this party is not worth a penny. Then it is worthless. But I do not think this is the case; if this party has to swallow this bitter pill and it is going to swallow it. Not in one piece, because some people just will not do it, but it must be swallowed. [...]

I still remember the original expression, it sounded like, scholarly, on the basis of Marxist science, that considering its nature it was indeed a counter-revolution. At first even Kádár did not say it like that. And it was right. It was said like this when our whole view on Marxist-Leninist science was doctrinaire, and it did fit the doctrines then, but today it does not, and people have not really accepted it either. So I also agree that the opinion held by the people and the opinion held by the party are coming closer to one another, but I do not consider it positive in itself, however, if it is happening on the basis of a fair and just evaluation, it is really positive.

Therefore I think comrade Grósz should say something about it, and I think it is quite possible for him to state that he considers it unfortunate that it was said like that. And we should be able to take this. At the same time, this event should by no means raise the issue that the Political Committee or the Central Committee would consider it a question of trust in relation to comrade Pozsgay that he thinks or talks like the majority or not. It is not a question of trust. I mean these two things, if comrade Grósz mentions them, if they need to be mentioned, either at the beginning or at the end, then it should be one sentence with two parts, or two sentences, not more. Thank you.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: Well, then, my train of thoughts is the following. I think between November 1 and November 3 there was such a big danger of a counter-revolution, that the government of Imre Nagy, the government led by a communist would not have been able to hold out. I would swear to the truth of this opinion of mine, I mean there was virtually no Hungarian military. (*Interruption: Because the army fell apart.*) It is not true that Béla Király would have been able to stabilize the situation without extensive fighting. I would not swear that it was impossible to find a solution without the Soviet troops, it cannot be sworn to, but I supported the idea back then, and today, that it certainly looked like the best solution.

[...]

György Fejti: [...] Having carefully read the summary by the sub-committee, I think it would cool the emotions a bit, and make the intellectual resonance come to the fore at last. I think this report is acceptable as a basis for discussion, it is detailed enough, and it refers to the process itself.

Why is it good to pass a judgement like that? On the one hand, because it is true. On the other hand, and I would refer to emotions once again, a detailed picture makes it possible for everyone to put the emphasis on what he personally considers to be true. I think this is also important.

Now, the third thing. I still do not think that the interpretation of this thing, its sudden appearance in current domestic politics has been fortunate in any way, because it has provoked rather bad-tempered debates. But by now it has also turned out that underlying these emotions and impulses, there is a chance of success as well, if we can handle the whole problem intelligently enough – the chance and the hope of clearing things up and of coming clean. Besides, we have to be aware of the fact that both sides tend to exaggerate concerning this issue. Partly unintentionally, out of inexperience, partly deliberately, if you like. We would do a big favour to our opponents if we did not take notice of that.

In spite of all that, apart from emphasizing the importance of the detailed picture, I think it is necessary to clearly state what was referred to by comrade Nyers, that in a certain moment in the chain of events the clear signs of a counter-revolution did show. This aspect must be emphasized without closing the issue, without making a political decision in the Central Committee on issues debated by historians. Because otherwise the issue will not rest. And without spectacularly exercising self-criticism. Self-criticism can be exercised in various forms. It could be delicate and concerned with details. It would help the Central Committee and the Political Committee a lot if we did not reject the possibility of this kind of self-criticism.

There are great expectations concerning the session of the Central Committee. There are also great worries. A lot of people anticipate receiving the classic answer in this respect, in the form of rejection, division, and exclusion. It would give a boost to the party both internationally and domestically if it managed to get out of this rather difficult and chaotic situation avoiding solutions of that kind. And it mainly depends on what is suggested by the individual statements of the officials of the Political Committee. Because the Central Committee in its present form is probably rather polarized, divided, and bewildered concerning this issue. They are certainly more bewildered than we are, since we are trying to find a solution, having weighed all the circumstances for the second time. And it basically depends on us what the orientation of the Central Committee would be in a debate of considerable dimensions. I certainly hope that we can push the events in the direction of purification, gaining strength, and cooling down.

Finally, the situation – the statement and the reaction of the press, the Hungarian press – has aroused international interest and triggered a slight panic on the part of our socialist friends and partners. Therefore it is in our best interest to drop the issue from the agenda as soon as possible, although it does not only depend on our decision or on the decision of the Central Committee. If on the agenda, at least it should not be open. It should rather be approaching the point of rest here, at home, and in the case of our allies as well. We should signal to them in some way that there is no need to worry.

[...]

Mihály Jassó: [...] An issue of such dimensions should be accurately prepared for. We have to prepare ourselves, the plenum, the party members, and the public. Talking about public opinion – I firmly believe that history does not only belong to us. Here, today, a lot of things belong to the people, a lot of things belong to the nation, the mass media and all, I would argue about one, but I would not argue about the other. History belongs to the Hungarian people, and not to the party. So it is the duty of historians to evaluate, and it is the job of the people to argue about it, together with us, of course, and so our job includes something else: drawing conclusions in reference to our policies, our actions, and our behavior. We have more to do than society as a whole by this much, but we must acknowledge that our history which we have lived through together, which we “have committed” together, belongs to all of us. I mean I agree with anyone who is not satisfied with winning public opinion within the party membership only, with anyone who is not satisfied with the judgement of party members alone. [...]

[...]

Imre Pozsgay: Honourable Political Committee! [...] I accept what comrade Grósz has suggested as a solution. It does not force me to agree with something that I cannot agree with. But it provides a chance of co-operation and finding a new unity. So I accept the formula he has recommended. And a lot of opinions and suggestions I have just heard from the speakers fit into it as well.

So I would like to come back to just a few things. Of course, I have to ponder the characteristics of the events again. If I cannot assume of others that their knowledge ends where they happened to stop, I cannot assume it of myself, either. I think it is part of public consensus. However, I still consider it a 'popular uprising'. And I consider the nature of a process or an event to be different from the actors involved in them and their

evaluation. Just like the evaluation of their actions. I lived these days through the same way as comrade Lukács, moreover, actively and I must also say that I felt threatened. It is, however, often personal experience that blur one's vision.

Excuse me for adding a few things to this debate which is rather disadvantageous for me. At the time of the Sipoy-uprising in 1857, the English viceroy and the correspondents working there were frequently sending reports to London. Marx never set foot in India in his whole life, he still wrote his reports in the London Times about the Sipoy-uprising; all of the reports of the viceroy and the correspondents proved to be a failure and historically wrong, while all of Marx's judgements proved to be correct in this issue. So much for personal experiences. It has been expressed in literature as well. Stendhal writes about the marquis del Dongo in the monastery in Parma who traversed the battle field in Waterloo without even noticing he was walking in history. So we should not mix up historical judgement and attitudes determined by personal experience. I ask you to understand this, since on the basis of my own experience I would also have an unambiguous evaluation of events.

But I repeat that I do believe it is possible to look at it in this light, and we should attempt to do so. Nobody wanted to beat me in this debate. I do not want to do anything like that, either. It is another reason why I had a good feeling listening to it in spite of the tension in it. But let me say something about the debates, and unity. Excuse me, again, comrade Tatai's experiences in companies are certainly important. But they might be slightly different from political experience. Because the Central Committee of Lenin and its effectiveness was immediately over and it immediately became a loyal servant of tyranny when debates were banned and members were forced to shut up – and those members had been openly debating the gravest issues in the time of civil war in Pravda. And it only increased their prestige, that is why I said that – and I owe you an answer, sort of, I usually say this to preserve our prestige, even if this intention is not clear for everyone – you should not be concerned that there is a debate, because the decision will not be made on the basis of authority.

And let me also say this: a debate is not a scandal in my eyes. And it is not a challenge to unity. Nothing was more devastating for this party than the appearance of unity. All the wrong decisions were made in the past fifteen years under the disguise of unity. The latest thing which was totally false was the XIIIth Congress. And its consequences became obvious for everyone after three months. If there is such a thing as a scandal in the history of a political movement, this has been it. I cannot imagine a great scandal. So let us not expect from each other to agree comfortably and with apparent unity, because the ones who want to play a serious role here will not have a stress-free, comfortable job for sure. The right to work here is only valid until the person believes at least of himself that he is to the advantage of the cause he is involved with. And he should be judged by the ones who had elected him. I think this is what you can call a fair attitude and a fair course of action. And I say this because this issue of the power struggle keeps coming back and I am bothered by it myself. All that sounds as if messages in cipher were being circulated here. No one should believe that there is a power struggle. On my part, there is certainly not. This message has been put through. Excuse me. The committee which can be deceived by such messages is actually making the prophecy come true.

Rezső Nyers: It is true of both sides.

Imre Pozsgay: Yes, indeed, both sides, so please, take that into consideration as well. Or else only one consistent attitude will remain for us, after all, to keep our mouths shut and there is always going to be someone else to tell the truth, to say what is really happening. It is not comfortable at all to be in minority, let me tell you that. In fact, it is terrible. But does it yield anything? This is the real question. And one is not trying to find the gain himself. How can we appear at the session of the Central Committee – well, it will be tough. But we do not improve the Central Committee's capacity to lead by hiding the differences of opinion. The Central Committee itself will solve the problem, I think, I hope, probably through an extremely impulsive discussion. My intention will be to help the solution to come about. But I do not think that a fake behavior and a false appearance would help. This is why I am asking for the support of the Political Committee.

Coming back to prestige and energy, the energy in debates. I do not know this, I only suspect that a debate like that can even have some impelling force. The dramatic nature of replacing [one phrase with another], the method that can be criticized – it is of course up to the Committee to make a judgement on it. And I accept it if they decide to make it public, even if I do not agree with it, since I have a different opinion. It is better than faking things, it is a clearer situation.

About things to do. If a country grinds to a halt... And comrade Grósz is right, this crisis had not been caused by us. We inherited it, and we have to handle it. But if a country stops functioning, then it is impossible to re-energize it with leaflets or magic formulas. If there is no propelling force... and I also agree in this, that is why I spoke at the first point on the agenda in the morning, because we need a programme, we need these programme ideas, and perhaps that would help us get out of trouble.

When in January 1849 Windischgrätz was making preparations to come to Hungary to conduct a military campaign in the winter which turned into the glorious spring campaign of the Hungarian revolution, he had two kinds of leaflets printed in Vienna. One was meant for the Hungarians: "just work, sow and reap, that is what you should be doing, do not let yourselves be diverted from the hoe and scythe". The other leaflet which was spread in Vienna read "we need to conduct a military campaign because those lazy Hungarians do not want to work" – and the Hungarians were impossible to drive back to the hoe and scythe until the whole thing was over. I am only saying this because a crisis – with or without Windischgrätz – needs to be done and over with all the same.

But I sincerely hope that we will not need to resort to applying such tools, so I repeat again, I believe in having a programme, and I would like to participate in the development of it. But to make it possible, we have to process and digest these aspects of history, because we can tell people not to care about them, but all we would achieve is that they would be talking about them in a different way than we do. So I ask you again that having accepted the method of handling it suggested by comrade Grósz, the Committee should also consider that we will not have real prestige if there are no debates, even debates which are public in some cases. This is my opinion, and I foot the bill until I can be of use with it; and you should also think about what we should do. But I also think that the next session of the Central Committee – in spite of all the drama – will clean things up a bit, and will not let the party split.

Károly Grósz: Thank you. We have agreed, have we not, when we started to discuss this point, that we would not issue a decision, we would not make a decision, but rather we would discuss the problem. Therefore it is not necessary to close this off with

anything, we should simply stop. It is apparent that the existing differences and similarities of opinions are not the same today as they were, say, at the time of our discussion last week. I think this is quite reassuring and it points ahead. It does not guarantee in itself that the Central Committee would handle this issue in the same way. Our job is – if we all agree – to meticulously do our part in escorting the Central Committee in the direction of an attitude which is constructive, which is pointing ahead, which is for solving the problems; after all, there are various people with various pasts and lives who must have been living through recent events in a somewhat different mindset than we did. We have to calculate with that realistically. I will try to be of assistance in terms of that with my speech.

Passing a resolution and selecting the parts to be included in a public statement are only possible to do in accordance with our traditions – the committee we set up will be commissioned to put the statement together. We must not do it ourselves. Not a word of this should be included in the draft we send out, because we would influence the Central Committee with it. Instead, the speech and the discussion should influence them, and the committee responsible for editing a draft statement should put into words what we recommend there. Unless – and it is theoretically possible – the Central Committee wants the committee to present the part in connection with this, it is also possible. Then, there will be an opportunity to do so anyway. We select the committee, let them put their opinion into words, and let the Central Committee decide. I do not know if it is a task of the Central Committee, and this is not closely connected to this, but it is a result of this, so perhaps we should not go into this, that is, what we do after the session of the Central Committee. Because if they approve of the study's publication, if they accept that the written material we recommend should be debated in the party, it should be amended and then debated in the party, then the Central Committee should not make decisions on anything else.

We will have to prepare Imre Nagy's funeral politically, we will have to handle this issue and think it over, and think about the activity of the government at the same time. I mean we will have to take care of it politically. I think we should close this problem down and divert our attention on 20th and 21st towards agrarian issues, towards the debate about the Constitution, because I think members will receive an answer for their problems if they get a lesson [Sic!] in the programme which they readily accept and we will be listening to their advice with open ears. I suggest that we break because it is a quarter to seven. Thank you.



Document 10.

Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee [György Fejti on the Political
Committee's Resolution on the Revision of Show Trials].

Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpt).

February 20-21, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
[György Fejti on the Political Committee's Resolution
on the Revision of Show Trials]

February 20-21, 1989
Verbatim Record (Excerpt).

Comrade György Fejti: Dear Comrades! First of all I want to apologize for not being able to be present in the beginning of the miscellanies. The press conference did not end in time and we had to participate in it.

Comrades! We would like to ask for the agreement and support of the Central Committee to settle quite a complicated matter. As you all know the historical analysis and review of the past period is under process and a separate committee is in charge of it. Partly simultaneously with the work of this committee and partly independently from it the question emerged: what can we do with those criminal trials that took place between December of 1945 and 1962 and about which it can be firmly assumed that they contained some aspects of show trials. This matter is of interest to lawyers who are more or less familiar with this issue, historians, smaller and wider segments and groups of the society and people who had directly been engaged in such trials since there are individual requests for rehearings/reconsiderations submitted to the Minister of Justice or to the Public Prosecutor's Office in an increasing number.

After careful consideration of the circumstances the Central Committee has come to the decision on the 7th of February that we should face this not fully known problematic and it would be practical to set up a committee composed of historians and lawyers. The Government would assign an appropriate person to be the chairman of this committee and the assignment of the committee members would be approved by the Minister of Justice. This committee would review – primarily from a political and secondarily from a legal perspective – those trials of the above mentioned period that were very likely to contain elements of show trials.

What would be the use of this investigation? On one hand, we could draw certain political and historical lessons from these investigations. On the other hand, the goal of these investigations could be that certain corrections be made in cases in which it is possible and necessary. However, the method and the content of these corrections would not be developed by this committee composed of historians and legal experts. These questions would be addressed in a following phase of the process.

Presently we would like to ask for the permission and agreement from the Central Committee that this initiative of the Political Committee be introduced to the Government. What makes it even more important, or I could say that it is almost unavoidable, is that in the present parliamentary session there was an interpellation concerning this question presented to the Minister of Justice and it would be a problem if this interpellation could not be answered in a way that is more or less acceptable for both the Parliament and the public opinion.

Based on the work that has been done so far there are basically nine groups of questions emerging about which this legal and historical investigation should be conducted. These nine greater themes are the following: first, the question of the so called show trials that were conducted in connection with the Hungarian Community and the Independent Smallholders' Party; second, the so called economic trials – as a collective term – such as the MAORT Trial and the Standard Trial; the third larger group of trials is the trials that concerned the military officers, among these ones we should deal with those

that have not been overviewed yet, the fourth is the so called trials of the social democrats. Here I also have to add that some of these trials had already been reexamined, since within this period we are presently concerned with the Central Committee's decision made in 1962 resulted in the political reevaluation of the Rajk-Trial. At the same time members of the social democratic party have already appealed in cases of infringement of their legal rights and were granted legal compensation. The fifth larger group of trials is made up of the trials related to the Church. The sixth group includes the trials related to the political situation that was a result of the taking into secularization of the ecclesiastical schools, such as the so called Pocspetri Trial [sic!]. The so called Yugoslavian trials make up the seventh group. The eighth group includes the trials that can be conceived as sabotage trials of particular occupational branches or large scale industries, such as the railway trial. Lastly we have to deal with certain trials that resulted from sabotages of the countryside population. These sabotages were partly related to the administrative measures against the class enemy and partly to the discontent resulting from the squeezing economical measures.

As you can see this is a quite wide range of trials that should be re-investigated. So far we cannot do anything else but guess to what degree any elements of show trials, taken in the strict sense of the definition, can be found in these trials. But it seems that it is worth taking the political risk to start settling this matter. The silences/secretcy – either real or imagined – about this matter may result in an even greater risk. Therefore, these investigation should be started with great discretion and circumspection.

The idea is that these investigations be carried out by independent experts who could be employed full-time, since this work requires the rereading of thousands, ten thousands of pages of documents related to these trials. Of course it would also mean that all of the documents and materials related to these trials should be gathered and made available for this committee. A proposal was made within the Political Committee that a special committee should be set up within the party that would coordinate in terms of political concerns this relatively large scale and delicate investigation. The committee members would be the Minister of the Home Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Director of the Institute for Party History, and this committee would be complemented, in the second phase of the investigations, with the Chairman of the Supreme Court and the Supreme Prosecutor. The Political Committee wishes to assign myself to the task of coordinating this work.

Here I also have to mention that simultaneously with these investigations we should deal with questions concerning the forced resettlement of persons and that of the internment, especially with the measures related to the internment camp of Recsk. To be able to review this matter the documents related to it have to be collected. Basically, with the approval of the Comrade Minister of Internal Affairs this work has already started.

The question emerges: what degree of publicity should the launching of these investigations get, how should these investigations be interpreted and presented to the public. In the session of the Political Committee the opinion was given voice that if the Central Committee agrees to it, the Government would be responsible for dealing with these questions in its next upcoming session and for assigning the appropriate persons to the necessary tasks. Following the session of the Government the spokesperson could present information and Comrade Kulcsar could also get support from the Government's decision when he responds to the interpellation. The opinion was also expressed that, from the perspective of the way of handling this whole matter, it might be useful if the spokesperson of the Party could announce that the Central Committee and the Party intends to initiate an objective, calm and moderate review of this problematic. This was

one of the issues I wanted to raise presently. The other issue is concerned with the materials that are stored in the Ministry of Home Affairs. To use the phrase, 'it happened' that there is a great quantity of briefs, materials related to the trials and to the investigations stored in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and these materials can be reviewed now since they had already been catalogued. That time it was due to a political decision that these materials were taken to the Ministry of Home Affairs in order to be stored securely there. This institution of course worked. At the same time the question was rightfully posed that the placement of these materials in the Ministry of Home Affairs is not the best solution since the accessibility to these materials is not the best there either. The Political Committee reviewed this matter and came to the conclusion that the placement of these materials in archives should be settled in legal terms. At the same time legal regulations should define the prohibition of access – to a certain period of time – to those documents that are not ready or not appropriate to be introduced to the public for certain political reasons and the state should designate an order of procedures to handle these documents. There is a great quantity of materials accumulated and only a smaller part of it would be deposited in the Institute for Party History. Here we would also want to request authorization to start a careful review of these materials from political and legal perspectives and not only the materials but also other documents that are stored there. After reviewing these materials should the decision be made concerning where these materials should be deposited, who can have access to them and what are the quantities and contents of the documents that should not be made accessible to the public.



Document 11.
Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
(Proposal to the Central Committee on a Resolution on the Regulatory
Concept of the New Constitution).
February 20-21, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
Proposal to the Central Committee on a Resolution on the Regulatory Concept of the
New Constitution.

February 20-21, 1989.

Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party

Central Committee

Signed by Karoly Grosz

II/9.

CC/113/a.

Proposal to the Central Committee on the position concerning the concept for the regulation of the new Constitution

According to the decision of the party congress – as an outcome of a wide-ranging and successfully coordinated political, scientific and professional background-work that followed a well defined organization and schedule – the review of the present Constitution has been accomplished and as a result of it the concept for the regulation of the Constitution has been articulated. The work completed until the present and the attached concept for the regulation of the Constitution, as its essence is concerned, is in accordance with those political principles that were determined on the 31st of May, 1989 as a position of the Central Committee towards the review of the Constitution.

The concept for the regulation of the new Constitution is primarily based on the suggestions of the workshops assigned for the reviewing work, but it contains other scientific results and thoughts that were articulated during the related work conducted within the Ministry of Justice. The thus distilled concept was reviewed twice by a committee commissioned by the Central Committee to coordinate the political guidance of this project centering on the Constitution. Moreover, the concept was reviewed by the Council of Ministers and its advisory board, the constitutional committee of the Parliament, a scientific-professional committee guided by the Minister of Justice, as well as many institutions and social organizations contributed to its completion with their comments. This concept was also discussed by the Political Committee and after having decided that the concept was ready for a comprehensive political discussion it was submitted to the Central Committee to be reviewed and commented on with the proviso that there were still imbalances in the concept and disproportionateness in its elaboration. Throughout the following debates and further work it is necessary to clarify the concept's pertinence to the preambulum, the form of government and the basic principles of the social-political-economical structure, thus, making it unequivocal that it is socialism that we intend to build further in our nation.

During the further work it seems reasonable to submit some of the politically more important articles of the Constitution (such as the preambulum, the basic principles of the social-political-economical structure, the introduction of the institution of the President of the Republic, the establishment of the Constitutional Courts, the new order of the parliamentary elections) to the Political Committee to be reviewed one by one and to develop its own position in questions if necessary or to consult with the Central Committee.

Based on the work we have completed so far the following work seems to have to be scheduled as follows: the discussion of the concept in the March session of the Parliament could be followed by the concrete wording of the bill of the new Constitution

that, then, could be offered for a carefully considered, well planned and sufficiently prepared social debate; then after making use of the result of this debate the constitutional law could be submitted to the Parliament. It would be reasonable that the Central Committee express its opinion on the draft of the constitution before it gets submitted to the Parliament. It would necessarily be reasonable that this new constitutional law be approved by a referendum.

In order to inform the members of the party and to prepare for the social debate on the new Constitution it would be rational that the concept and the Central Committee's evaluation of it be published in the Bulletin of the Primary Party Organization.

Declaratory Proposition

1. The Central Committee acknowledges that according to the decision developed in the party congress the review of the presently effective Constitution has been completed, and based on the developed concept of regulation the preparation of the new statute will begin under the title of "The Constitution of Hungary."
2. The Central Committee gives its support to that the concept of regulation of the new Constitution be submitted for discussion to the Parliament in its next session, and then begin the preparation of the draft of the new constitutional law that will be offered for social debate thereafter. After summarizing and utilizing the thus gained experiences the new Constitution should be submitted to the Parliament. Prior to it the Central Committee will evaluate the draft of the Constitution. The Central Committee considers it reasonable that this new constitutional law be approved by a referendum.
3. The Central Committee acknowledges that some of the politically more important articles of the Constitution (such as the preambulum, the basic principles of the social-political-economical structure, the introduction of the institution of the President of the Republic, the establishment of the Constitutional Courts, the new order of the parliamentary elections) will be submitted to the Political Committee to be reviewed one by one and to be corrected by it if necessary or if needed the Political Committee may consult with the Central Committee.
4. The concept for the regulation of the Constitution as well as the Central Committee's debate on it should be published in the Bulletin of the Primary Party Organization, so that the concept can be arranged for a social debate and the members of the party can be informed about it.

Document 12.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
February 28, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee
February 28, 1989.
Verbatim Record of Minutes

[Subject:] **Motion on the settlement of the ownership rights of real estates managed by the Party**

Béla Kovács: Honourable Political Committee! At the meeting of December 13, the Political Committee decided that before settling the ownership rights of real estates managed by the Party, the main steps of execution shall be reviewed. Therefore, we propose the following motion. Concerning ownership rights we distinguish between the period preceding 1978 and the period following this date. In this case the division line is set by the September 1977 decision of the Council of Ministers, which gave provisions on the arrangements for ownership rights. We carried out all the tasks set by the decision of the Council of Ministers between January 1, 1978 and December 1980. As a result, we unanimously registered the Party's management rights and the State's ownership rights for the estates used by the Party and the estates owned by the Party. By the execution of this task we essentially put an end to the previous mixed ownership, where exchanges and purchases took place, too.

Taking this as a starting point, we propose to register all the estates that became the property of the Party before 1978, regardless of the source of their establishment, as property of the MSZMP. In the present case, this concerns 2306 real estates of 5.1 billion HUF. We propose a different solution for those real estates that were built from state funds in the period following January 1, 1978. This concerns 335 real estates. We propose two types of solutions for the issues within this group. The first proposal is to maintain the present situation unchanged. This means that the real estates used by the Party should remain the property of the Hungarian state and management rights should belong to the Central Committee of MSZMP.

The second solution: we propose to offer a property in exchange for those real estates that should necessarily become the property of the Party – these are primarily party headquarters. Buildings that became the property of the Party before 1978 could be offered as an exchange for these estates. We think of the educational directorates and guest houses first of all. Therefore it is necessary to make decisions about the restructuring of the institution system of educational directorates.

I would like to inform the Political Committee that we satisfactorily executed all tasks related to ownership rights. We spent approximately 5 billion HUF from own funds on renovation and maintenance of buildings, which amount to 60-70% of the registered value of these buildings. I report to the Political Committee that we would like to enforce the decision about ownership rights cautiously, taking care of the lawfulness of the procedure. Consequently, we are in close contact with the legal department of the Council of Ministers, with the relevant members of the Supreme Prosecution and the Supreme Court. We would like to make steps in co-operation and in harmony with county party committees in order to select the buildings that we plan to offer as an exchange for the 335 estates mentioned previously.

We think, that this kind of solution would enable us to execute the task in two steps. Those buildings that became the property of the Party before 1978 could be taken care of in the near future. The registration of transfer would take place free of charge, just as the receipt of these properties was free of charge too. In the second step, the buildings

that are to be offered as an exchange for the mentioned 335 estates should be selected. I would like to mention, that according to Paragraph 22 of the Land Law in process, in case the category of management rights is modified, the real estates will officially become the property of the MSZMP. I ask the Political Committee to accept our proposal.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: I would like to ask a question. Under what kind of law or provision did we transfer ownership rights? Was it according to a decision of the Council of Ministers?

Béla Kovács: It was a decree of the Council of Ministers in 1977. According to decree no. 3339 of the Council of Ministers, which was preceded by two resolutions of the Political Committee.

Rezső Nyers: At the moment, I mean the legal...

Béla Kovács: According to which it happened, yes.

Rezső Nyers: So it was an open provision of the Council of Ministers?

Béla Kovács: Open provision no. 3339.

Károly Grósz: If it is number three thousand, it cannot be open. (*Interruptions: It is secret, secret.*)

Rezső Nyers: And no. 88?

Béla Kovács: Provision no. 88 was the abolishment of no. 3339. As a result it got back the same way.

Rezső Nyers: So it is absolutely settled legally. Is it secret too?

Béla Kovács: Well. (*Interruptions: It is.*)

Rezső Nyers: This is secret too, yes, secret. Yes, yes, this also, no. 33 secret. Well does this name the Minister of Finance as executive of the decree?

Béla Kovács: Yes, and the MÉM.

Rezső Nyers: And the MÉM. So, with these...

Béla Kovács: In the next step, the Minister of Finance should sign a contract with the Department of Party Economy. In order to prepare public opinion suitably, we plan to publish a background material at the weekend, which would detail theoretically the settlement – starting from 1948, how and in what form the estates became our property –, and we will make it public. It is after this, that the meeting with the Minister of Finance would take place, the contract would be signed and land registration offices would receive instructions. [...]

[...]

Mihály Jassó: Well, there might be a body that does not question the authority of the decree of 1978, but of the one of 1949.

Miklós Németh: Those of 1948 and of 1949.

Károly Grósz: By the time they get to the bottom of it, we can change back to one-party system, we will be further down the road, and we can abolish the parties. This is the perspective in social development.

[Subject:] **The negotiations**

György Fejti: We would continue these preliminary discussions – which will speed up a bit this week. Tomorrow afternoon we are going to meet the New March Front. Thursday afternoon we meet the Hungarian Democratic Forum. The meeting of the constitutional committee will take place Friday morning, where we shall review the proposals of the Central Committee, the party law, the presidential system and the Constitutional Court. [We meet] the representatives of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary on Friday afternoon, the Ferenc Münnich Society and the representatives of the Association of Hungarian Freedom Fighters and Anti-Fascists on Saturday morning, the Smallholders' Party in the afternoon, the National Council of the Hungarian Youth Organisations on Sunday morning, the representatives of the People's Party in the afternoon, and the Alliance of Free Democrats on Monday morning. In such a way, the preparation round would be completed.



Document 13.
Record of Conversation between Gorbachev and Miklós Németh.
Excerpt.
March 3, 1989.



Record of Conversation between Mihail S. Gorbachev and Miklós Németh
Moscow, March 3, 1989
Excerpt

Mihail S. Gorbachev congratulates Németh on the occasion of him having been appointed Prime Minister, and asks him how long he has been in office.

Miklós Németh: For almost a hundred days. I am often asked whether I am thinking about reviewing and sizing up what I have done so far. I usually answer that I have no time for that. Even if I make an assessment, it is for the Central Committee or the parliament. One has to be critical of one's own activities.

Gorbachev: True enough. In the single-party system self-criticism is supposed to be an important issue. Possibly the most significant condition is how successfully the leading role of the party is achieved. On the other hand, our mistakes and shortcomings are all rooted in the lack of criticism. Naturally, I am not only talking about the management, the top layer of party leaders, but I mean it on a larger scale — the whole of the party. During the Stalin regime, from 1934 to his death, there were only two party congresses.

Németh: In the days when Lenin was at the helm, there were endless debates and a clear political line was forming all the same.

Gorbachev: Yes, because there were entirely different conditions both in the party and in the country. Now we are opening the way towards socialist pluralism. The multiplicity of opinions is not a tragedy for the society; on the contrary, it is a real advantage. Of course there are some that want to expropriate democracy for their own selfish objectives, but it can be dealt with, it is merely the question of struggle. Yeltsin has now a peculiar position in the Central Committee. His is a typically leftist, rather obnoxious position, which can nevertheless find favourable reception in the public. We have to put up with several problems that directly concern people's lives, and those who cry out loud enough about these can reap a dividend. The majority of people cannot be blamed for this, as they are hoping that a man like him will once be able to do something for them. Besides, it is important that they learn on their own the difference between a demagogue and a serious politician. There is nothing flattering I could say about a member of the Central Committee who gambles at the expectations, while he knows very well that the party program is aiming at the quickest possible way of satisfying these expectations.

Németh: It happens quite often with us. There are always a few members of parliament who rise to speak from such a demagogic position.

Gorbachev: The main thing is to be honest and truthful in the Central Committee, in the parliament and among the people as well, and have a clear conscience. Otherwise the personality will break down, and the downfall is unavoidable.

Németh: What we consider the most important task for the time being is creating a majority within the Central Committee that can be joined around a unified program.

Gorbachev: This, of course does not rule out the possibility of the existence of some kind of left wing or right wing views.

Németh: Yes, the only important thing is that the center be strong.

Gorbachev: We are for a majority that relies on democratic development. We would like to revitalise the role of the councils, agitate the activity of MPs, and assure complete publicity. Without these, the real power of the workers does not exist. See what we had before in the past: masses of the people were alienated from property, politics and culture. Yet the principal goal of socialism is overcoming alienation and putting man in the focus of attention.

Németh: I see no difference between pluralism in a single-party system and in a multiparty system. You are absolutely right: if there is freedom of thought and a unified program according to which people behave, everything goes on as it should. Last May we laid the foundations for such a practice in the course of the party conferenceⁱ. None the less, there were certain illusions.

Gorbachev: Experience showed us that nothing could be achieved at the first trial. We have to get back to the accepted agreements and decisions, polishing them, making them more precise, and then moving on.

Németh: Yes, the conditions are changing. Theoretically it is important for us what you said in Kiev. Every socialist country is developing in its idiosyncratic way, and their leaders are above all accountable for their own people. May it be one party or more — life will show which solution is more effective. Within our conditions, state and party have become the same. This affected the development of the country in a most unfavourable way. However, we should not eradicate everything with a stroke, because what we achieved is worth noting.

Gorbachev: I believe that the statements of Pozsgay are quite extremist in this respect. The events of 1956 indeed started with the dissatisfaction of the people. Later, however, the events aggravated into a counterrevolution and bloodshed. This cannot be overlooked.

Németh: Most important of all, these questions should not cause disparity in the society. Some say that we need to look at history in the same way, because otherwise there will be no unity in society at all. In reality, however, the unity of interpreting the past does not exist. The main thing is that we have unity in relation to the present situation and in the policy to follow.

Gorbachev: Indeed, every generation is responsible for the present, first and foremost.

M. Németh: I am convinced that the organic interrelation and conformity of the economy and politics in fundamental issues is indispensable. A principal question is that of pace. We Hungarians have started the economic reform a long ago, while leaving the political institutions intact. Since last May, we have witnessed a rapid development and transformation of the political system. A new election system, the reorganisation of parliament and other measures follow one another in such a rapid succession, the wheels

of the machine are turning with such dizzying speed that it could pose a potential danger to society if this process intercepted economic development.

Nobody actually doubts that a democratic constitutional state is unavoidable for a successful people's economy to function. Having only that, though, without a productive economy, then political transformations will happen in a void, *l'art pour l'art*. Pozsgay says that there is nothing wrong in politics intercepting the economy. We, on the contrary, think that the harmonisation of the two is needed. We support and develop economic institutions, parallel with changes in the political sphere. We will act with responsibility.

M. S. Gorbachev: You have touched upon an important issue. The process of renewal is gradually spreading over the whole of the socialist bloc, and adds to the political culture and historical experiences of all these countries according to the local conditions. The most important for all of them, however, is turning towards the people and revitalising the socialist system. While listening to you, our own situation came to my mind. Of course it is difficult to achieve total synchronicity between politics and the economy, but at least we have to try. You might remember what Lenin used to say: "We Bolsheviks have conquered Russia, so now we have to learn how to govern it." They rushed ahead in politics, which was in itself normal at the time. But you are right: if we fail to utilise the political drives and motivations to create a healthy economy, the people will unavoidably become discontented.

[...]

[Gorbachev Archive, Moscow. Document obtained by Magdolna Baráth, Budapest. Translated by Csaba Farkas. Parts of this document were published in the briefing book published for the conference The End of Cold War in Europe, 1989: "New Thinking" and New Evidence, Musgrove, St.Simon's Island, Georgia, 1-3 May, 1998. Doc. No. 29.]

ⁱ The conference of the HSWP on 20-22 May, 1988 was a breakthrough in the history of the party replacing general secretary János Kádár by Károly Grósz, renewing the leadership and giving way to introducing radical reforms.



Document 14.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
March 14, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee

March 14, 1989.

Verbatim Record of Minutes

[Subject:] **Motion concerning the political parties and the Constitutional Court**

György Fejti: Our decision, that we think of the reform of the political system within the framework of the multi-party system, is quite recent. I believe we have not yet been able to think through all the consequences of this important theoretical decision, we could not yet assess what this means. And as we are forming the draft of the party law, well, certain dilemmas arise.

What do I mean? We have to thoroughly think over the financing of the party's activities. We have to think over the status economy, and the process of becoming independent. We have to think over the former concept of scope of authority. And we have to think over where we want to put the emphasis of the party activity in the long run, whether it should be within or without the framework of factories, institutions. On discussing these questions, naturally we have to start from the fact, that a legal settlement can be correct only if it sets the same requirements for all the parties. Therefore, all advantages are mutual advantages, and the disadvantages are also mutual disadvantages, shared with the other parties.

At last, I would like to ask a question which does not belong to the motion. In the practice of certain countries, for example in the practice of the German Federal Republic, there is a passage which prohibits the formation of a party if it replaces or continues the activities of an abolished party. We should consider whether a constraining arrangement like this, or a similar one is necessary here.

[...] Taking into consideration that this is a very delicate issue, we refrain from the custom of proposing the principles of the law, we propose the valid text of the bill as we know it. Logically, we do not ask for a decision from the Political Committee, but we promote the bill for primary political consultation, which should be followed by several consultations.

I find it impossible to propose the party law to the Parliament without having further consultations about it with these proto-parties. Either in the form of negotiations among the parties, or between those who prepare the law and the proto-parties. So this is a primary negotiation, a consultation.

We have to think over the rest of the schedule as well, including the time when we plan to introduce the proposal to the Central Committee of the Party. Whether this should take place before launching the working period, or at the end of the working period, that is, after the negotiations with the other parties. As for myself, I would suggest this latter option, and I also propose to inform the Central Committee of the Party in advance about this work.

[...] Our starting point is a situation in which the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party operated, and a drastic and quick change of this situation would fundamentally destabilise us. Therefore, in this case a mere claim for equal chances cannot be accepted as a serious argument. So this is not a situation when we are presently creating a political structure. There is a situation, and if we change this situation, that can be terribly disadvantageous for the MSZMP. Therefore I do not consider the claim for quick and immediate change politically justified. I have written down my opinion, that, of course, in the long run we have to decide what kind of structure we want, because regulations, legal

regulations have to be consistent.

Kálmán Kulcsár: Thank you very much. Let me get back to the issue of scheduling for a moment if I may. Because the order of events is really important here. It is possible that the party law and the Constitutional Court are put forward to Parliament simultaneously, but in this case the enforcement of the party law should be postponed until the Constitutional Court is organised.

For various other reasons I would suggest to take the Constitutional Court to Parliament relatively soon. This is possible, since the Constitutional Court does not have to be discussed on a social level, or at least I do not see any reason for that. The party law has a deadline, which is August 1. It can be taken to Parliament by this time, if all the consultations conducted by comrade Fejti and the social debate are carried out. By this time the Constitutional Court has to be organised.

The party law is not related to the president of the republic, that is, to the two Chambers. Any relevance it has to these institutions can be regulated by these laws, that is, in the election law for the current Parliament, or by the law concerning the president of the republic. Therefore, I think it best not to discuss this here, because then we leave all options open to do however we please and we may later on.

The first question, whether it is necessary to prohibit a party that replaces an abolished party. Well, this is to be considered, because actually there is no way to prevent the same organisation to go to the Constitutional Court to be registered as many times as they want under a different name or a minor change in their program. The question is, and this is to be decided, whether we take on to grant this opportunity, or we simply declare what is suggested by the substance of law.

Otherwise, there is a special reason for this in the German Federal Republic. And this is why I regard the issue, whether a prohibition of this kind should stay or not, a matter for consideration. There they were continuously trying to prevent the appearance of a kind of Nazi successor party, without too much success. Because the Republican Party is here, and they seem to represent a practically racist ideology.

Should we require the nomination of candidates and the continuous operation? I am not sure in the first one, that a compulsory nomination should be required. If a party does not want to appoint a representative, than why should it, since a party cannot be obliged to take part in the national election, if it does not want to do so. Let's suppose it wants to be a local party and wants to operate at the local authorities. Some kind of requirement for continuous operation is necessary, as comrade Fejti has mentioned. Namely, the company is fixed, properties are fixed, financial assets are fixed. Economic activity can be conducted under the aegis of the party, on more favourable conditions than otherwise. This can be exploited very easily. Therefore, I think that continuous operation should be required. What is more, we have another idea, namely that continuous operation should be monitored, and if it does not exist, then the Constitutional Court should declare that the party terminated its operation, and the Constitutional Court deletes it from the register.

Regarding dissolution, as comrade Fejti said, there is no problem. In case of election, it is completely a matter of decision – if I may say so – whether it should receive extra funds or not. In the practice of the world, there is precedent for everything. So I almost say that anything can be justified here. It is important that we create a clear situation. We talked about follow-up payment, as well as statement.

And here is this really difficult issue, prohibition at workplace, prohibition of organisation at the armed forces, at courts and at the public prosecutor's office. I think, that here too, we can give ourselves a little time. Because it is possible that we do not regulate

this issue in the party law, but in the law on national defence, in the law on the Ministry of the Interior or in the law on the Police, in the law on the organisation of courts and public prosecutor's offices. Or in the Constitution itself. So we can get this far, we can secure some time for transition, for finding a temporary solution.

Of course, if we do not regulate this in the party law, then the various organisations might file their claims to establish a party organisation, say within the army. At the moment, the regulations of military service do not allow this to happen. The regulations of military service list all the organisations that are allowed to operate in the army. As long as there is no new Constitution, we can say that the regulations of military service do not allow this. At this point they initiate a procedure, whether the Constitution is against the law or not, whether it is anti-constitutional or not. All these take time.

I would not suggest to fix a situation we prefer in the law, that should really be a technical kind of law. I think that this is what would be practical, and this is what the representatives of the MSZMP, the Ministry of Justice and the government could agree on with the representatives of proto-parties in negotiations. It is quite unlikely that a party law would be widely accepted if it imposed extra limits in any sense. In this case, it is best to take this position. I suggest that if we are not going to make a statement about this issue now, then we should consider whether to discuss it now or not. The solution that was mentioned by comrade Fejti is also possible; we may declare that this is to be enforced after a transition period. We might reach an agreement of this kind.

In case it does not work, then the easiest solution is the law on national defence, the organisations, the laws on the relevant organisations – which, do not have to be drafted very quickly, of course. Therefore, this really needs thorough consideration. The party can be considered an established party, if its party rules are accepted. Then it is established. Registration is the condition for becoming a legal person. So, is this the situation here? The legal situation, according to the law on public assembly.

The situation of taxing is as it was explained by comrade Fejti. I have no further comments.

Rezső Nyers: Finally, the party organisations operating in companies. But this does not belong here. I think, that we do not have to do anything for the moment. These party organisations do not have to be abolished, but the party should make a decision about reviewing the certificates of these party organisations, and we should delete any reference to party control in them. By this, we draw the issue's fang. Then we will have to find a way for the communists to remain organised, without giving reason for the massive formation of other parties, or for the formation of two parties. Even if a social democratic party is formed, that still can cause problems and induce party quarrels.

Károly Grósz: The armed forces showed and still show the toughest and hardest opposition against our concept. This is not known by everybody, that's why I demanded the floor, to tell it here. As we know, the party committee of the army practically declared in its corporate decision that it is against the introduction of the multi-party system in the army.

In my personal opinion, party organisations should not be prohibited in any workplace. In any workplace, in the army, in state administration or in the Ministry of the Interior. In my opinion, we talk about two different things here. One of these things is organisation, the other is preventing party quarrels in these organisations. Because we will push these party organisations into illegality. Assuming all responsibility I can declare, that they will not withdraw. It is absolutely pointless to enter this street.

[...]

Károly Grósz: [...] So we try to establish a certain practice within our conditions. I think the way we try to find this is exceptional in the practice of operating socialism. Even the more so, because we decided that we do not want these Potemkin-parties as mechanism, we want a real and living political organisation. [...] organisations that we are so determined about, they are not determined about them to the same extent. Of course this will take time, it cannot happen overnight. [...]

[...] Comrade Németh mentioned the schedule. This will have to be put together. We have a schedule that I proposed to the Central Committee in February. It did not become a resolution, it was a kind of script. Without making a decision there, we agreed that we would discuss it again here and work out the details. Well, if we feel, that time has come..., although we agreed that comrade Fejti has to do his round and talk with the different organisations, find out where they stand, and the schedule should be tackled only afterwards. This can be more or less concluded, or it is being concluded. So, this is what we can do.

Document 15.
Statutory Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable. Record (Excerpts).
March 22, 1989.



The Statutory Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

March 22, 1989

(Excerpts from the Minutes)

On behalf of the Independent Lawyer's Forum (henceforth FJF) Imre Kónya greets all those present. In his introduction he emphasizes that by convening this meeting FJF as an independent, non-political organization intends to host this forum with the aim to contribute to an exchange of ideas between alternative organizations in the form of a roundtable talk so that from time to time they can discuss and reconcile their position on important issues and make a joint effort to implement the objectives of the reform process.

Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Society (henceforth BZSBT), Károly Vigh:

He welcomes the idea of the meeting and endorses everything contained in the call made by FJF, though he notes that the call for the joint meeting had been publicized in the media well before the participating organizations learned about it. It would have been more appropriate if a joint position had been formed by the participating organizations first, and the call should have been publicized only afterwards.

FJF, Imre Kónya: The call was made public under pressure of time, for the public had already been expecting to hear what was later included in it. It was also announced at the meeting of the Alliance of Free Democrats (henceforth SZDSZ) on Sunday, and the delegates unanimously welcomed it.

Federation of Young Democrats (henceforth FIDESZ), László Kövér: In his remarks he points out that his organization had long intended to form a forum for coordinating a joint position on current issues, but for various reasons the initiation was not made. They welcome the initiation and the content of the call made by FJF, which is received favorably by FIDESZ. FJF can give valuable technical and professional help. He considers it necessary to hold regular meetings and establish their precise conditions. He thinks it would be important to consider what other issues are regarded as important for joint discussion by the participating organizations in addition to questions regarding the constitution (he refers here to the bills to be submitted soon to the Parliament, etc.).

Hungarian Democratic Forum (henceforth MDF), György Szabad: He says that all the participating organizations wish to proceed in the same direction in a coordinated fashion. This is the time of thinking together, talking to one another, which can also be productive without any organized form for the time being. He can envisage an organized form of discussion in the long run. At the moment he believes the participants of this meeting should work out the methods of establishing a roundtable discussion and consider the order of issues to be discussed.

The scale and the composition of the new opposition can not be seen clearly at present. Contact should be regular, but for the time being the meetings should be only consultative; the participating organizations should by no means form a summit organ. The meetings should rather be friendly occasions of exchanging ideas. However, such meetings should not be an exclusive forum for discussion. There should be a possibility – without any *arričre pensée* – for two or more participating organizations to discuss any topic if something comes up for coordinating their positions. The liberty of combinations should be maintained. He interprets the call made by FJF that it intends to give professional help,

rather than play the role of directing and controlling the discussions; this should be clarified.

FJF, Imre Kónya: It is evident that any endeavor to play a role of directing or controlling the discussions is out of question on the part of FJF.

Alliance of Free Democrats (henceforth, SZDSZ), Bálint Magyar: The contribution to be made by FJF in the course of the talks should be regarded as a kind of service.

MDF, György Szabad: He informs all those present that MDF is ready to make self-corrections if needed, and this is what he suggests to other organizations, hoping that his idea will meet friendly consensus. His organization accepts the call for cooperation with utmost flexibility and sincerity.

SZDSZ, Bálint Magyar: He welcomes the initiation of FJF and everything contained in it. He thinks the meetings should be held regularly, at least every other week. There have been attempts before to make goodwill initiations in this issue, but the one made by FJF is much more appropriate. The roundtable is not a summit organ, it does not have a directing role, but it is important to stress that the roundtable should be committed to what has been discussed and agreed upon by the participating organizations, and also what representatives of each organization make public, in the course of the talks.

He believes no prospective participant should be excluded from the talks, with one exception, MSZMP. It is also important to clarify who should participate as representatives. He firmly believes that no one should be allowed to attend the roundtable meetings by personal right (*participants applaud*). Participation should be based on certain criteria. However, the criteria must be defined with caution, because if merely formal criteria are taken into consideration, then these will also allow organizations to participate which are not regarded by many of us as desirable partners, and certain other organizations might be excluded (like FIDESZ, New March Front) which should be included in a joint platform.

Before making the roundtable talks regular, it must also be clarified that only those should participate as representatives who have been authorized by their members, and it is also desirable that the participating organizations have an elected body of leadership.

Hungarian People's Party (henceforth, MNP), Csaba Varga: He finds the initiation for the talks appropriate. He can see a political possibility here because FJF is a truly independent organization which does not intend to monopolize any right to coordinate the talks, but it offers an opportunity for unprejudiced discussion. This is all the more important because in his opinion there is a lot of prejudice, partial or fragmentary information around. If the various misunderstandings between the different organizations can be eliminated, the roundtable talks will be useful. He objects to setting the order of meetings in advance. Meetings must be convened should the occasion arise. He thinks it would be important to establish a system for distributing information. If the majority so wishes, the roundtable may be convened right away, he believes. He thinks it is also important to determine in the course of this discussion, not later, who will be entitled to attend the meetings. He does not have any objections concerning the present list of those invited. Then he informs the participants of the meeting that membership in his party is increasing unexpectedly. The first congress of his party is planned to be convened for the beginning of May, which – considering the large number of members – will be a meeting

of delegates. At the end of February the number of party members was 12,000, but this number has been continuously growing ever since. As a result of this rapid increase they have to face serious difficulties in that the large number of members inevitably leads to a division between those in power and those without power, which then might result in getting divorced from the masses that his party wants to avoid by all means. They are now working on establishing local organizations. Regarding the planned objectives of the roundtable he thinks it is essential to clarify the definitions of notions to be used, for instance the phrase "radical transformation" used in the call, which may obviously have a different meaning for each organizations. It must also be discussed what kind of new Hungary the various parties envisage or would like to have. In his view it is not possible to discuss particular issues without clarifying more comprehensive, long-term reform ideas. To his knowledge MSZMP has put on the agenda for the beginning of April to discuss the idea of summoning a roundtable forum.

BZSBT, Károly Vigh: In his speech at the meeting of the Péter Veres Society László Dobos implicated the Patriotic People's Front in connection with the Hungarian People's Party. He want to know how this issue was resolved.

MNP, Csaba Varga: In his answer he states that according to the newly elected party leadership the Patriotic People's Front can no longer function in its present form. Under present conditions of power, however, its local organizations, especially in rural areas, can still give help to the democratic forces, so it would not be advisable to destroy them. They are convinced, however, that the Patriotic People's Front can not assume a coordinating role between the parties. If the Front is capable of renewing itself, for instance it replaces its three secretaries and undergoes major changes, then the leaders of MNP will not repudiate it. However, in its present form, as a national committee, it is meaningless, it can only make sense if it could give a better possibility for those not wishing to join any political party.

Democratic League of Free Trade Unions (henceforth, League), László Bruszt: Their organization has been formed in order make the most of joining different forces. The elaboration of the statute is underway. The league integrates several different kinds of trade unions, smaller ones with some 50 members as well as bigger ones with 4,000 members. Their member organizations welcome the idea of a roundtable. They believe it is important to consider the issues of transition together with the different organizations, how the monolithic forms of power can be transformed into democratic institutions. He stresses the importance of defining the relationship between the new, opposition parties and the independent trade unions in one of the upcoming session soon, so that the programs of the various parties should not lead to the destruction of the trade union movement. This is why his organization welcomes the initiation made by FJF. The participating representatives should adopt a program for discussion and different forms of cooperation. His proposal to this effect is as follows:

- the relationship between the opposition parties and the independent trade unions
- clarifying the relationship between the different alternative organizations
- the relationship between the alternative organizations and MSZMP

He further proposes that certain fundamental norms must be established for cooperation - to be defined jointly by the participants - which are then accepted by all the organizations as binding, since this is the only possible way for true cooperation.

Independent Smallholders' Party (henceforth FKGP), Imre Boross: He welcomes the initiation of FJF, stating that his party accepts everything contained in the call. Concerning the modes of cooperation he sees it important to emphasize that all the participating organizations must represent firmly and uniformly in their policy what will be agreed in this forum, since it is a basic precondition for cooperation, this is the only way it makes sense, the only way it can work.

The roundtable talk planned by MSZMP for April is premature, he believes. He suggests that if the participating organizations are addressed in this issue by MSZMP, they should not accept any site or date right away under the conditions set by MSZMP.

Social Democratic Party (henceforth MSZDP), Mihály Révész T.: His party warmly welcomes the invitation of FJF, saying that this forum is very much needed. He does not wish to repeat what has been said with respect to the importance of cooperation, rather, agreeing with everything said so far he would like to provide some additional thoughts.

MSZDP has gained a lot of grave experience concerning a coalition situation, mentioning that he himself, as a researcher of the issue, know quite a lot about it. He believes the exchange of information is of utmost importance, since it is possible to trace down what MSZMP intends to do with the alternative organizations. With respect to the consultative talks he call attention to the negative experience that cooperation may be hindered by the attitude of "I take the issue home, discuss it and come back with an answer". What usually happens is that something very different is brought back as an answer from what has been proposed in the discussion at the session. He expresses his hope that this time it will not happen. With respect to formal decisions he states that they should be really serious decisions, not only symbolical ones, giving true and practical help for the tasks to be solved in the course of the "transition". Concerning the talks they had with MSZMP recently, he was not at all delighted with the 1,5 hours they spent with representatives of the ruling party together.

Speaking about the planned forms of cooperation he outlines the possibility of involving different experts of different issues into the discussion.

FIDESZ, Viktor Orbán: He puts a question to the representative of MSZDP as to how one should interpret the fact that MSZDP jointly celebrated March 15 with MSZMP. Is there anything between the two parties which goes beyond this form of cooperation?

MSZDP, Mihály Révész T.: "The position of my party is that wherever we are invited, we go there. No other invitation has been received by the party. Anyhow, MSZDP strive for national unity."

FIDESZ, Viktor Orbán: He refers to the fact that no invitation has been send to celebrate March 15, the commemorations organized by alternative organizations were attended by those who felt they should be there.

FJF, Imre Kónya: "Let's not obscure the truth, these questions have to be clarified precisely. Why did MSZDP take part in the celebration on the side of MSZMP?"

MSZDP, Mihály Révész T.: "It was a mishap."

BZSBT, Károly Vigh: "MSZDP at least distanced itself from MSZMP, this is evident from the speech made by its spokesman at the staircase of the National Museum, but the



Smallholders' Party did not. At least it was not obvious from the speech of the otherwise highly respectable Vince Vörös."

[A discussion breaks out over this issue, the participants express their own opinion, they discuss the issue in small groups, make comments, and it is not possible to record what is being said because several people speak at the same time. Then they switch to another topic, without having formed any position on the issue.]

[...]

FJF, Imre Kónya: The next meeting should be held in a week. He reads out the unanimously accepted final text of the definition concerning the participants of the roundtable.

The founders of the Roundtable are independent, opposition organizations intending to enforce sovereignty of the people which do not and do not wish to share the privileges of power and do not intend to make an alliance with organizations which strive to do so.

The participants of the Roundtable make efforts to achieve harmony and consensus in their policy to transform Hungary into a democratic country. The Roundtable can not be joined by personal right but the participating organizations can adopt new members by unanimous decision.

Document 16.
Memorandum of Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev
and Károly Grósz, General Secretary
of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Excerpts).
March 23-24, 1989.



**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

Made in 2 copies

Inf/1371/1989

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 emphasised that we wish to retain political power and find a solution to our problems by political means, avoiding armed conflict.

We have a good chance 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 being still alive. On the other hand, by drawing the necessary conclusions, we might dishearten certain layers of our policy's active supporters from the party. Lack of self-confidence is palpable enough in the party anyway. [...]

Comrade Gorbachev agreed that the Western world do not want instability in Eastern Europe, including Hungary as well, because at the present situation it would be adverse to their interests. None the less, it is quite apparent that they intend to facilitate the realisation and strengthening of a development that suits their own political ideas.

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

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

Comrade Grósz emphasised 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: student protest, uprising, and counter-revolution.

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

Document 17.
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
March 30, 1989.



Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

March 30, 1989

(Excerpts from the Minutes)

FJF, Imre Kónya: After his opening words he gives the floor to the representatives of the organizations present. Several of them inform the participants that they have received a phone call from the MSZMP CC concerning the meeting planned for April 8, 1989. The phone call was an invitation to talks with MSZMP.

[...]

MDF, István Csurka: "We are not going to attend, only all of us together. We have to insist that all the participating organizations of the Roundtable should be invited."

SZDSZ, Bálint Magyar: "We have to object to this old form of invitation by all means that we are ordered to go to MSZMP, though this time the invitation is to the Academy building. We have to make it clear to them that they can no longer hold discussions in the old way, there is no separate negotiation, and it is not they who can determine the date and the way of negotiations. The different parties should approach one another on a partnership basis in these issues, there should be no room for any dicate."

Several participants: "They should not prescribe who we have to side with, when we should go to a meeting."

[...]

SZDSZ, Bálint Magyar: He elaborates on his opinion that the obstructive policy of MSZMP is again obvious in that it intends to place itself into the center by setting up two "extremist" wings, or at least that is what it is trying to achieve. These tactics are intended to make sure on the one hand that MSZMP be the "index of the balance", and on the other that MSZMP have a "voting machine" of its own if the organizations brought in by it have an equal right of veto, for the organizations manipulated by MSZMP would seemingly contribute to a uniform position, but most of them would represent the opinion of MSZMP as a result of being its transmissive organizations, or they would vote with MSZMP. Here he lists organizations like the Patriotic People's Front (HNF), the National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT), the National Peace Council (OBT), the Alliance of Partisans, etc.

Concerning further issues he believes that since MSZMP have identified all those to be invited, it must be up to it who will be invited. The only thing that has to be made clear to them is that this is not going to be a real roundtable, the negotiations will not be carried out in the form of a roundtable. Discussion can only be bilateral this way, with MSZMP on one side, including whatever organization they want to, and with independent organizations on the other side. But we also claim the right of determining who else can be present on our side."

[...]

MDF, György Szabad: He calls the attention to the fact that it would be more appropriate to determine conditions rather than denying the proposal outright. Conditions must be set, and if they are met, the negotiations can start. These conditions should be:

- the independent organizations should have the right to determine who they want to include as partners on their own side
- what the order of negotiations should be, giving the floor to each side in turn
- which are the issues considered important for discussion by the alternative organizations right now

This latter condition is all the more important because it seems now that the tactics MSZMP follows is that negotiations should be held, but the most important issues should be evaded, thus they can make use of the time for their own good. This is necessary for them to be able to submit bills to the Parliament without the consent of the opposition, bills such as the party bill as a supplement to the law regulating the right of assembly, the election bill, the media bill, and finally all this crowned by the constitution. They want to have the appearance that the opposition is just talking without having any definite conception of what should be done when it come to hard facts. Therefore, if we dodge the negotiations on grounds of formal objections, we score an own goal. We should not make any concession concerning the range of participants in the talks, or in determining the agenda, the contents and the structure of the negotiations.

SZDSZ, B[álint] Magyar: Let us send it to Fejti, informing him that after delivery the letter will be made public.

[Then the participants draw up a letter together as an answer to the invitation sent by MSZMP to attend the April 8 meeting. The text proposed by the participants are put into its final form by György Sándorfi (FJF), and then it is read out to the participants. The letter worded this way is approved of unanimously and FJF is authorized to send it to the MSZMP CC after it is cleaned up. The letter is to be sent to the Hungarian News Agency, Magyar Hírlap and Magyar Nemzet, with the condition that the full text of the letter must be published.]

Document 18.

Record of Negotiations between Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher, London
[Analysis of Changes in Eastern Europe].

April 6, 1989.



**Record of Negotiations between M. S. Gorbachev and Prime Minister of Great
Britain Margaret Thatcher, London**
April 6, 1989

[...]

Gorbachev. On the one hand, there is a point of view emerging in the White House that the success of our *perestroika*, the development of the new image of the Soviet Union, is not beneficial for the West. Secretary of State James Baker returned from his trip to Western Europe on the verge of panic. Europe, according to him, is ready to respond to our invitation to build new relations in Europe and in the entire world. The West Germans, in this sense, simply lost their minds. And so they begin to think about how to stop the influence of our policy, of our initiatives on the minds of the West.

Of course, these processes go through a struggle in the United States. There are a lot of people there who sympathize with our policy, who think that the continuation of *perestroika* is good for American interests, because it would allow us to ensure security, development of the economy, cultural and other kinds of exchanges. These forces are sufficiently large and influential. However, there is also another wing, which thinks in the tradition of the known statements by Kissinger, Brzezinski, and other right-wing individuals, who have now got closer to the new American administration, and are trying their best. We receive letters from George Bush and we see entire passages there that are copied from known public statements by Kissinger. In short, there is a clear concern there that the West is losing public opinion. And so they are trying to dilute the mood of cooperation with us.

On the other hand, as we see from the negotiations that George Bush and James Baker had in Western Europe, the process of working out a response to our proposals is slowing down in the West. And from this fact comes the desire to undermine the interest in *perestroika*, in our initiatives, and to present it all under the cover of general considerations – let's see where *perestroika* will lead, how will it end, whether it is associated with the person of Gorbachev only, and if so, whether we should make the future of the West dependent on it. I am telling you frankly, we are concerned about it.

Even you, Mrs. Thatcher, as we can see, exhibit more reservations recently. We are informed that you are being advised, especially by the banking circles, not to rush, to be careful. And this shows, both in your statements, and in your practical policy.

Thatcher. If anybody made such a recommendation, it has not reached me. How did it reach you?

Gorbachev. That's how it happens. What an interesting world, isn't it?

[...]

Thatcher. That is why we are concerned about the immensity of your tasks. It is one thing to tell people what to do and where to work, and a quite different one to make it so that they would work properly in the conditions of large production and complex technology. People start feeling less confident of themselves and of their future. I saw it during my trip to the Soviet Union in 1987. The old order is being broken, and the people

do not know what will come in its place. And how is it – to rely on one's own labor and entrepreneurship, whether it would bring a better life. This is what we are concerned about in your *perestroika*.

Gorbachev. Why are you so scared for our *perestroika*?

Thatcher. Precisely because I was the first to start an analogous *perestroika* in my country. And also because I was the first to say that your success is in our interest. It is in our interest that the Soviet Union would become more peaceful, more affluent, more open to change. So that it would go together with personal freedoms, with more openness, and exchanges. Continue your course, and we will support your line. The prize will be enormous. But you have to see the economic difficulties. Not too long ago I discussed these issues in detail with one Soviet Academician. He said that Gorbachev would need our common support for ten years. I do not know the exact length of time, but in principle it is right.

We are glad to see the political changes in the Soviet Union. Your recent elections [on 26 March 1989 to the Congress of People's Deputies] were a real watershed. They showed that the people are not afraid of using political power. But in addition to this, you need finances, you need a strong economy, educated and capable managers. I know that you have enough talent, but it is not yet as clear as in the political sphere.

And in the international sphere – I am thinking about your allies in Eastern Europe – promising changes are taking place. I visited Hungary, and I saw that that country is experiencing a stage of new freedom in politics, and in the economy. But they have already been moving two or three steps ahead of you in terms of introducing new economic forms and the freedom of enterprise for some time. Most interesting developments are under way in Poland. I met with Wojciech Jaruzelski. He is a prominent and honest politician who does everything he can for his country at a very difficult stage in its development. Let's take the latest events – the recognition of Solidarity. In my view, this is the beginning of political pluralism, because Solidarity is a political movement, not just a labor union. Young people, and the retired, take part in it, not only workers. I met with Solidarity leadership, and I repeatedly advised them to seek a dialogue with the government, not limit themselves to the confrontation. I said to them that you can never leave the negotiating chair empty, it would not lead to anything, and I can see that they have listened to my advice.

More complicated developments are under way in Czechoslovakia. In our analysis, everything is unclear there. And there is some evil irony in this, because Czechoslovakia was one of the most affluent and democratic states in Europe.

In the more general international context I can see the first fruit of our joint effort and the new approaches. The Agreement on Independence of Namibia has been signed. We are working together in the United Nations, in the Security Council, in such a spirit of cooperation which was unimaginable only recently. It led to the cease-fires between Iran and Iraq, and to the positive changes in the Middle East peace process. There are fewer positive signs in Central America. The United States is very concerned about the situation in this region. Everything began there from the fact that when the Sandinistas overthrew Somoza, they did not deliver on their promise to restore democracy in Nicaragua. The rebels in El Salvador receive weapons above and beyond any reasonable limit. All in all, there are reasons to be concerned there, as well as in the situation in the Horn of Africa.

The world represents a calico picture. In some regions, there are more positive

signs than in others. But we all want international success that would make the world safer, would stop the bloodshed in the hot spots.

You touched upon the policy of the new American administration. I know George Bush and James Baker very well. I do not see how they could make policy that would contradict President Reagan's course. Of course, Bush is a very different person from Reagan. Reagan was an idealist who firmly defended his convictions. But at the same time, it was very pleasant to deal with him, to have dialogue, and to negotiate. Bush is a more balanced person, he gives more attention to detail than Reagan did. But as a whole, he will continue the Reagan's line, including the Soviet-American relations. He will strive to achieve agreements that would be in our common interest.

Gorbachev. That is the question – in our common interests or in your Western interests?

Thatcher. I am convinced that in the common interest.

Gorbachev. Here you need a superpersuasion. [...] For example, we now have a imbalanced financial system, budget deficit. There is a large volume of free money in the country, that is not supported by consumer products. People's incomes grow faster than the production of consumer goods. This is where the deficit is coming from. I remember that only 15 years ago the shelves of these stores were overstocked with butter, milk, meat, and then we consumed 1/3 or even 1/2 less of those products than we do now. The demand was limited because the incomes were unlimited [sic- limited - trans.]. Now we have a new problem – not only to produce more goods of a better quality, but also to balance the incomes with the volume of production. We think that this is a task of primary importance; if this is not done, it is hard to hope for an economic improvement in general. That is why we are trying to regulate incomes under the control of the economic mechanism, and at the same time to stimulate entrepreneurship and initiative, self-financing. We cannot change the entire economic mechanism at once, it would simply blow up the economy. We could, of course, undertake some temporary measures in order to alleviate the situation for the people, for example, we could get foreign loans, and saturate the market with goods purchased with that money. Some people here advocate that.

Thatcher. But this is not a solution for your problem. This is not policy.

Gorbachev. Exactly. And in the situation of our budget deficit, it would be simply a violation of our obligations to our country. That is why we are developing a policy for building an economic, industrial base for the production of consumer goods, so that later we would be able to eliminate the deficit with our own goods.

[...]

Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Notes of A.S. Chernyaev

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya
for The National Security Archive



Document 19.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
April 19, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee

April 19, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[Subject:] **Double chamber parliamentary system**

Rezső Nyers: As to voting for the constitutional system, I am on the opinion that our standpoint has lost ground indeed – society is uncertain. My suggestion is that our opinion be considered as an alternative solution concerning the timing and methods of legislation. We should not be so resolute. I am only saying this because after all we have to come to a consensus, as Németh ... (*intermission not understandable*) Yes, I do agree with that. Yes. All in all, we have to achieve a consensus of political factors. If we are too resolute while the others are compliant, then we are easily in for yet another defeat. So we must be careful, as they keep changing their opinion – so I have noted – in the issue of the Constitutional Assembly. It would mean announcing earlier elections – it is logical. The organisation of MDF made a logical point in the question.

None the less, others are eager to postpone the elections. Should we now advance the date of elections, they would certainly postpone it. For the time being there is a certain group – and I do not mean alternatives as a whole, only a most intransigent group saturated with ideology and counter-ideology, motivated by a delusion that power and the people... power must be tamed, though, and the people will triumph after all. So we had better be careful with all this.

Well, in my opinion, there must be an alternative for parliamentary elections this autumn – because parliamentary elections are the key issue here – and the presidential elections at the same time. Moreover, there must be an alternative that in autumn... the original idea that by-elections are held in autumn, and then parliamentary and presidential elections next spring. And then we negotiate. What is more... we can come to a consensus of some sort that we accept.

In case the elections were postponed to spring, it is certain that the present parliament is too weak for legislation. Consequently it must be strengthened just as – now I cannot say more than that – or we form these national committees. They can actually function spontaneously as a second chamber; or perhaps we should call it the council of national consensus. However, we should avoid the term 'national rescue committee' at all cost. Rescuing the country can wait.

So, then we have to go one step further. All the same, I myself share the view that the schedule of constitutional legislation with this parliament is not quite plausible, so I have a leaning toward advanced elections. None the less, we should not be adamant nurturing one single variation.

About the single and double chamber parliament: I do agree that both variations are possible. In today's Hungary, the majority are for single chamber parliament. People take sides spontaneously, without much argument and thorough consideration, at least many of them do. I am for the double chamber system, mainly for the sake of balance, as comrade Kulcsár has outlined it so clearly in his exposition. In my opinion the main issue is not so much balance but – perhaps from a slightly different angle – so that real interests of society enter the political sphere in a different section as well. I do not think that in the party section the reception of social interests and opinions is capable of expressing the real interests of society in its entirety; I do not think at all. It is a strongly politicised ... I am totally for – so it is the best solution but not the most complete – and besides I think it is

important to infuse the interest of local governments into political decisions. Not more than comrade Kulcsár noted. For counter-balance. After all, this is a serious factor in shaping politics, not only a stunt to arrest further follies [sic.]. It is more than that, even in Hungary.

Our experience is that the issue of regional interests is raised with considerable vehemence even among ordinary people, in questions like the difference in electricity rates, water rates, different pricing of consumer products – which means that economic policy is driven by regional aspects in the eye of the masses. I am not talking about the local government and science and all that being autonomous things. Autonomies are not compliant with political parties. They will all have representatives in the parties, for sure, but it is more likely that local governments will be re-politicised instead. Local governments will not influence the political organisation. So that is why I support the idea.

At the same time, however, I say that we should not be rigid in our opinion. We must be careful to minimise our defeats and be convertible [sic.] about this issue. I should reason this way, if possible, but then we must reconcile it with an elegant gesture if it is not the way to go. If it comes to that, the last solution is that we stick to the first past the post system for parliamentary elections. As to our position regarding the voting system... Well, I'd rather get back to the second chamber, so that it is clear what I was saying.

I think the representation of councils, the representation of the Academy of Sciences, of churches and minority societies... these four representations are the most important. I also agree that the representation of the corporate system is not necessary – it has to be resolved outside parliament –, it has no relevance.

Now, as far as the voting system is concerned: I agree with the proposition that a combined system is set up. I also agree that the elections should be held before 23 October. It would be the best thing to happen, but all the same, we must think it over and take into account how the current government measures affect the social climate this year and what lasting effects they will show next year. Seemingly we cannot avoid reorganising the finances. One must think it over. It does not mean that we refrain from the October elections – it is not out of the question. We simply have to take into account these measures. We can say more about this no sooner than in a week's time. [...]

Imre Pozsgay: I am under the influence of the latest events that happened in Poland, as far as the consensus and the preparations for the parliamentary elections are concerned. In Poland, a peculiar situation has evolved: the upper house, or rather the would-be senate, is intended as a playground for the parties to compete, while they made a proportionate agreement, a political treaty in fact, for their presence in the legislation.

Communists got 38%, and together with their possible coalition partners they will exceed 60%, for which they received guarantees. I only mention this because naturally the political situation will determine what formation we are to use for the constitutional bodies and for electing and managing the legislative system. Taking this as a starting point, I agree with comrade Nyers and I accept what comrade Németh noted, namely that it takes two to make a bargain. That is we have to be prepared for alternatives while going equipped to political negotiations.

The hot issue of legitimisation and legitimacy will not be taken off the agenda with the elections, only with a consensus. Should the consensus not happen before the elections, the same movements and organisations will fall back on the problem of legitimacy and pour it over us once again. That is why we have to watch out and prepare for this consideration, instead of concentrating on how the elections are conducted. The latter is naturally just as important but this is exactly why alternatives need to be offered. If we

overburden the consensus with claims that they cannot accept, then it does not matter how magnificent the elections turn out to be, the parliament will evoke the same objections as it does now, in this ... situation.

I believe that a consensus can be achieved. That is why I stress that we must be prepared for it. The consensus is possible and it must happen before we set up the political agenda for the elections and other events. It seems undeniable so far that the most heated debate is expected about the date and system of elections, and about constitutional legislation. About these issues. Now it seems apparent for me that most speeches during the parliamentary session in November concerned and hastened the change of Constitution. Contributions both inside and outside parliament indicate that this [the elections?] is not the most pressing issue. The political situation dictates that it can be postponed as the last issue of importance, and if we come to a successful consensus, then I am in for the agenda that comrade Miklós Nemeth suggested.

One more thing about legislation and the elections. Perhaps the electoral law will come up later but all the same, let me express my views on the question. I also think that a combination of the first past the post and constituency representation systems is the most practical option. Its practicality comes from the fact that the outcome of the competition that we expect from the elections will not so much depend on the specific political programs as on what kind of national leaders the competitors can come up with on the one hand, and what sort of candidates are standing for parliament in the constituencies on the other hand. It all depends on personalities. Having said that, despite all my scruples, let me stress it once again that the MSZMP have unsurpassable advantages, provided that we prepare cannily for the effects of the party's renewal. When I say unsurpassable advantage, I do not expect a victory with absolute majority, because it is most unlikely. I rather expect a result that makes it possible to form a government and find a viable coalition partner. With insufficient results, however, it is impossible to find a coalition partner.

As far as the form of parliament is concerned: there will be a heated debate, I suppose. I personally do not prefer the double chamber system, but I can accept the forming of a combined second chamber if political negotiations point in that direction. As all parliamentary forms, this one is also rooted in English parliamentary history. At the time it made sense because the aristocracy wanted to ensure their survival on a hereditary basis, while on a more rational level, they made a pact with the bourgeoisie at the same time. They granted them the legislative power but retained the guarantees for maintaining the existing social system. We are simply not able to repeat this. I cannot conceive a second chamber that is loyal to the government. Those people would be just as biased in the political and other struggles of the nation, and they will be oriented just as any other citizen in this country. Consequently the chamber will be unable to fulfil its role as moderator. It should be taken into account both from a political and an organisational point of view. I do accept the importance of veto, the only problem is that there is no one to exercise it. Once being there, MPs will be affected by all the ongoing political debates and act accordingly. It must be considered.

Let me repeat once again: I am not categorically against the second chamber in parliament, I simply do not see the reason why it should be set up. Another remark that I wish to add concerns the representation of interests. Should the new parliamentary body lack legislative power and endowed only with the right to veto the proposed bills, the second chamber will become a place of frustration for those sent there to represent the voters' interest. If it has the right to veto but no legislative power, it will demoralise its members rather than prompt them for action. What is the solution then?

I am convinced that in countries of true parliamentary system legislation (the

Parliament, or the National Assembly – whatever we call it) is never based on representation of interests, but on party organisations. Each party considers its own program a national program. Of course, the basis on which this program lies is a different issue. This is the reason why even the most nationalistic Rumanian parties took on the representation of Hungarian interests between the two wars – they needed voters. It is a matter of political struggle who reaches which layer of society and when, but no political party is inclined to represent the interests of a segment of society. Take for example the communist parties: they appear in Parliament as national parties while they always call themselves the workers' parties at their basis. I mention this, because I share the view of those who claim that the totality of representation of interests does not gain full articulation in Parliament. Parliament is eligible and can be dismissed, so it has a different structure all the time – this is the sole guarantee in the political struggle and enforcement of interests. I could still imagine a national (limited) list in legislation after all, if we lay claim to representation of interests at the church, at local governments, at fields of science and at minorities, or if voters who can manifest their efforts this way lay such a claim. If there is a national list in legislation voters can indulge in the feeling that they took part in legislation, they were given a chance discuss the law to be passed.

In case a double chamber Parliament is set up through political meetings with the opposition and the independent parties, then this mixed version should be promoted, the one that compiles ethnic groups, churches, science and minorities. The Table of Magnates shifted towards this version between the wars, ..., true enough, the Lord Lieutenant was the subordinate of the government, but he was familiar with local conditions, and that's how he became member of the Table of Magnates. This way we wouldn't have to find a new name for the institution. It should not be the Table of Magnets, but we could call it the Upper House. 'Senate' sounds strange to Hungarians and it was not used in Hungarian political history, I don't think we should adopt it. This is all I would like to say for the moment, emphasising that political meetings should be our top priority during preparation.

[...]

[Subject:] **Preparation for Roundtable meetings**

Rezső Nyers: We discuss consultation meetings. We have already received the printed material, now we get information orally. Let's hear comrade Fejti.

György Fejti: Besides the things written down, I would like to point out some facts, that we think, might explain lack of attendance. Some of the reasons are long-lasting, some are temporary, and some can be eliminated.

First, I would like to mention something I have already talked about, namely that part of the organisations are not ready to negotiate. This is not our judgement, but the self-evaluation of some organisations. One the one hand, they lack an unanimous concept. On the other hand, there are discrepancies in questions of personnel. It is not clear whether the position of our former negotiation partners is secure or not. Their fear is palpable: they are afraid of being isolated as opposed to their rivals, if they get too close to power, or if they prove to be too permissive.

FIDESZ is of a particular interest. They claim that their essence lies in opposition, this is how they made a career. All efforts at integration would set them back. I say this, because this element, opposition, will most probably remain the feature of this

organisation. All others show greater willingness to co-operate and to adopt a flexible approach.

The next issue: some fear that the MSZMP is only scheming, and it does not honestly want to reach an agreement, that this is only a temporary necessity, it only wants to gain time. They are afraid that the MSZMP deceives these organisations, plans to set them against each other, so it wants to crush them as soon as there is a chance, it wants to marginalise them. There is a natural response: power should be counter-balanced by power, so they should join forces. This basic idea comes from the Alliance of Free Democrats. They were the first to say, that organisations should not give in to „salami tactics”, they should form a block which is strong enough to manifest itself at meetings as opposition to MSZMP.

According to some analyses, meetings are more urgent for the MSZMP than for them. There is a comparison to the preparation of the Polish Roundtable. They claim – and these are facts – that they have already reached the goals the Solidarity achieved at the end of a long negotiation period. This means that they are legal, double publicity is already history, they can access public information, what is more, they could influence public opinion even in questions that are still considered taboo in Poland. Such areas are: the army, domestic affairs, nomenclature – at the time these issues were simply discarded in Poland. Therefore, some of the organisations think that time is on their side, the MSZMP is divided and it will be forced to make further concessions, so it is worth discrediting the present delegation of negotiations, blame them for the slow pace of the negotiations or for failure.

I also have to mention another argument, which claims that whoever enters a coalition with the MSZMP will definitely be dead in politics, for the coming years will destroy the MSZMP as well as its potential partners. So, they should break into Parliament, they should run in elections – but in the primary role of a constructive opposition, because these organisations do not benefit from coalition. This view is not shared by all organisations. It is the principle of the Free Democrats, and of the Hungarian Democratic Forum to some extent.

Besides these, a so-called block-solidarity manifests itself too. Many organisations informed us, that this is not too convenient for them either, but no one will take responsibility for disrupting unity. I would like to add, that the MDF did not take part in the last meeting (14 April) and the others acknowledge their absence with resignation and announced it unjustified. There was an actual reason too: they did not want the collapsing management of the MSZMP to experience success, so some tactical considerations played a part too. They had to show their power to the Central Committee.

More precisely: let's see the positions for negotiations, the issues that we disagree on, and the issues that we hold similar views on. The first question is the nature of the negotiation. We aimed at holding a National Roundtable meeting, possibly with representational participation. We said that we do not want to exclude anybody, the meeting should be viable, and that is the only limit to participation. We seemed to be able to ease anxieties about the MSZMP holding meetings with only those organisations which are loyal to it by suggesting that decision making should be based on consensus. So in the first phase of the negotiation period everyone accepted the principle of representation and the fact that participants were of a wide range. The Alliance of Free Democrats considered this arrangement unacceptable. They wanted bilateral meetings between the power and its sub-organisations, and the representatives of society. This is a basic question. Are we to accept this method? I have to say, that, much to our regret, this is the aim of the SZDSZ.

This is just an aim for the moment, but the organisations that were absent gave their consent.

The next debated issue – although views are significantly less controversial in this respect – is the question of our competence, the question of guarantee. We did not only talk about consultations even at the start, but there is a deliberate misunderstanding here. In their statements they keep accusing us of wanting merely fictional negotiations, forums for consultation. Our initial position was, that this should be a political forum for harmonising interests, without direct functions of public law, and without a direct decision making function. Functions of administration and popular representation should not be mistaken for political functions. We explained that guarantee is provided by the parties of the agreement who undertake to enforce what they signed, making use of their influence in governmental or parliamentary bodies. So we suggested the enforcement of the so-called Polish practice. The organisations seem to accept it.

The New March Front is an exception for the time being. It claims its right to establish the National Committee, but this is not accepted by the Opposition Roundtable. In their last statement they accepted the enforcement of the Polish practice, and added that regarding those issues in which consensus is not achieved, the MSZMP should undertake to submit to Parliament an alternative proposition as well, which reflects the concept of the Opposition Roundtable.

I consider this problematic. There is a chance for compromise concerning the issue of presenting a different view and taking it to the decision making bodies, to Parliament and to governmental bodies.

The next issue: the content of negotiations. There is consensus that political reforms and transition should be discussed, but the issue has a narrower and a wider scope. More precisely, there is consensus that party-law and political infrastructure (conditions for the operation of parties, financing, property) should be discussed. We also agree that elections should be discussed. There are suggestions that the publicity of press, national information service also belong to the issue of transition. I consider this debatable. Some incriminated points of the Penal Code are considered to be disturbing transition. I think that we may enter a compromise in this respect too.

Otherwise, the Penal Code is being revised at the moment. Nevertheless, it should not be included in the content of negotiations. We could reach a compromise by considering the issue, but not focusing on it, when we discuss the question of transition. The SZDSZ is on the opinion – an the other organisations more or less share this view – that there is no point in discussing any other long-term project. There is no point in discussing legislation, the institution of head of state or the Constitutional Court. There is real fear in the background of this standpoint, namely that the MSZMP makes use of its parliamentary majority and postpones all the issues to after the elections. This seems to be possible in the case of the Constitution, but it is quite unlikely in the case of the institution of the head of state and the Constitutional Court.

The present Parliament does not want to elect the complete Constitutional Court. This is a gesture and it is also appreciated by some of the organisations. As we have agreed on it earlier, we propose to elect five members out of eleven, so some members could be appointed after the new parliamentary elections.

This is a negotiation package: the question of political reform and transition. Once again it is the Alliance of Free Democrats who show refusal concerning the warding off of economic crisis and socio-political issues. Other organisations showed their willingness to discuss these issues at bilateral meetings. The SZDSZ does not want to assume a make-believe responsibility for in-process arrangements. However, I think that it is in our

interest to discuss these issues. Society also expects us to talk about these questions. We can also gain a tactical advantage by pointing to the fact that none of the organisations have a comprehensive and viable program for warding off economic crisis, and we can undertake to moderate social demagogy. This means that in spite of the preparations for the elections we opt for a moderate behaviour as opposed to radical and non-feasible claims. Therefore I think it is in our own interest to discuss this.

Other organisations suggested that we should consider the intellectual sector as well. The Peoples' Party proposed to discuss three issues: the political reform, the economic reform and the reform of the intellectual sector. I am indifferent regarding this last issue. If we relate our proposition concerning publicity and free press to the reform of the intellectual sector, most organisations would quite likely accept it.

It is interesting that approaches are least controversial in matters of regulations and schedule of negotiations. All organisations agree that plenary sessions should open substantial negotiations. This means that negotiations should commence and terminate by plenary sessions, which are to be public, and all organisations should have the same time limit to speak. There is consensus that the schedule of the negotiations should be maintained until the next elections.

There was a suggestion that it should be possible to hold plenary sessions during the negotiation period, but only if minor results are achieved. So the function of the plenary session is to inform society that an issue has been solved. Real work should take place in the form of professional work committees and sub-committees. An agreement has to be obtained that these committees would not be open for the public, but protocols would have to be recorded and made public after the negotiations.

There is an agreement that decision making should be based on consensus. We suggested, and most organisations agreed, that consensus should be interpreted in a limited way, namely, that in case there is disagreement in non-cardinal issues, a decision can still be made concerning main issues while stating divergent views.

As for the venue, we suggested the Academy, the organisations prefer the Parliament.

There is one last question that belongs to substantial issues of debate: the pre-conditions of substantial negotiations. We suggested that legal organisations and self-defined organisations should take part in the negotiations, but this proposition can be dismissed if it is not feasible legally or technically. We also asked for moderation for the time of negotiations. As opposed to this, the organisations of the opposition ask the Central Committee of the MSZMP to publish an official declaration in which it would acknowledge members of the Opposition Roundtable equal partners, it would undertake no to abuse its majority in Parliament meaning that it would not initiate unilateral legislative procedures and would not suspend rights for political freedom. Well, these pre-conditions are highly problematic.

I would like to conclude by the following questions: Do we think that it is possible to establish a Roundtable of this kind? Does it have a future? What kind of negotiation techniques should we adopt? In my opinion it is quite difficult to say today whether a Roundtable of this combination can be established or not. There are signs indicating that it can, but there are serious signs of refusal too. In my opinion relaxed, flexible and consistent negotiations can result in the desired series of meetings, because the Opposition Roundtable is not a stable construction. This means that if we had time to wait peacefully, disagreements would prevail – it is quite obvious even now, that Roundtable meetings disturb organisational sovereignty and the formation of an independent standpoint. We have to be careful to avoid making steps which encourage agreement within the

Opposition Roundtable. We had better make gestures which improve this block. Since issues have reached a standstill, I would find it advisable if relevant members of the Political Committee would make use of their personal influence so that negotiations could move beyond this standstill. I mean comrade Pozsgay, comrade Nyers and others, who could help overcoming this standstill.

As our minimal program, we could establish a forum of fewer members, so that contacts could be maintained because they decrease distrust, the basis of legislation could be expanded, and undesired processes of radicalisation could be hindered. As our maximum program, meetings could be held with complete representation, not in the form of bilateral meetings, but in a Roundtable. This way we could come to an agreement with some of the organisations and set perspectives for co-operation in elections. We could make up a platform in some issues, which could be the basis for long-term co-operation later on, including a coalition after the elections. It is primarily the historic parties that seem to be interested: the Social Democratic Party, The Peoples' Party and the Smallholders' Party.

I would like to conclude by emphasising that it is worth holding negotiations with everybody who is willing to do so, although we should avoid encouraging extreme expectations. Just as there is no point in dramatising the events up till now. As I have noted, we should try to isolate extreme views, we should loosen the existing block and enter negotiations again.

[...]

Mátyás Szűrös: I would like to elaborate on only the following issues. I agree, this preparatory meeting has fulfilled its task so far. Right now, there is a new situation. So, if I have to answer the question whether we should come to an agreement with the opposition, my answer is 'yes'. There are several signs indicating that agreement is possible, but we have to modify our approach.

Considering this new situation – the altered and continuously changing situation – the MSZMP could draw up a declaration (which would satisfy some of the claims, not necessarily all, but that is not a problem today), that we are ready to bring the date of the elections forward. This declaration should be worded in the most convenient way. The MSZMP is expected not to abuse its parliamentary majority. We have to go around this somehow.

We also have to keep in mind the debates concerning the last issue and the previous issues of the agenda. So, in the present situation, I wouldn't refrain from the idea that the MSZMP should compose a declaration of this kind, which would make the alternative organisations see that the MSZMP considers them equal partners. There is nothing particular about this, it is worth thinking it over.

The second issue, I mean the third issue: Is the Roundtable a stable association? Is it our aim to disrupt it? I don't think so. We have to think it over. Should we loosen their unity, or should we accept their association? It doesn't matter how strong an association it is. It is quite obvious that they are not strong enough. So, if we want to divide them, well, that will take a lot of time. They certainly see that they have a task here, but I don't think that their aim is to disrupt the MSZMP at all costs – although this is the goal of some of the organisations.

Negotiations should be continued at the highest level, that is, at the level of leading bodies. The issues we mentioned are still topical for negotiations. However, we should focus on the elections, on the adoption of parliamentary democracy or representational

democracy, on the shift from a single-party system to a multi-party system, and on issues we can come to an agreement in on behalf of the nation. I wouldn't elaborate on these issues now.

There are a few things here which indicate that we don't have to be afraid. The MSZMP has the broadest means to tackle problems – this is quite obvious from previous issues. We can also come up with some alternatives before they do, which might strengthen our position. Disruptive policy might not be the best, after all we should not be suspicious of every move they make.

As for the format of negotiations: this would be a Roundtable with two parties, the representatives or the delegation of the MSZMP on the one hand, and the alternative parties on the other. We could agree on appointing a neutral president who would conduct the negotiations, since, due to the peculiar situation, this is not a direct party meeting. What do I mean? This is only an example. It would be difficult to appoint a president whom all parties would accept, but consider Brúnó F. Straub for example as president. But he might as well be the president of the Academy of Science and, as soon as the Parliament has been set up, he could be president of Parliament too. Although the president of Parliament belongs to a single party, but there are others too, members of the Academy. The function of the position could be the basis here. Because one either belongs to the party or to the alternative parties, and now we have to mingle somehow. This is only an idea, but it's quite likely that the method of negotiations will have to be made smoother. It will be more than enough to tackle matters of content. This is complicated enough, I would not like to go into details of other issues now.

Rezső Nyers: I agree, negotiations have fulfilled their task and exploited all opportunities up till now. Their aim was to establish connections with the opposition, and I don't think that anything more than that was to be expected. Therefore, I don't think that they proved a fiasco. However, if we don't take the initiative, if we don't make moves to overcome the standstill in negotiations, then these negotiations would come to a dead end. I think that we should come forward with the standpoint of the Central Committee – we did have an original Central Committee standpoint –, thus, by being volunteers, we could make it obvious for our potential negotiation partners, and could re-assure the public as well, that we intend to come to an agreement. This should not look like an urgent issue for us. We should emphasise what comrade Fejti, comrade Kótai and comrade Szűrös said: these issues have not been discussed before, they are not included in our original standpoint, so this is how we can help the negotiations pass standstill.

We need to make steps that would improve confidence. We either make a Central Committee decision, or we write to those with whom we want to negotiate. We have to think it over, which move to make. I find the thought of transferring national Roundtable to Parliament interesting. This way, the independent group of Parliament could also be included in the Roundtable. They may have a far more important role than most of the other organisations.

In my opinion it is also possible to hold negotiations with the parties only, and later on, with those who register themselves as a party, while assuring them that any voluntary participation is welcome at the Roundtable.

Well, what else did I want to say? Conditions set against us should not be accepted. Those are absolute nonsense. However, I would not reject it in an offended manner, I would elegantly overlook them. What a nonsense it is that they set conditions for us! It is childish anyway, so those who set conditions should be treated as children: make no response to them. As opposed to them, we put forward our propositions with a concrete

conciliatory intention.

Well, we have to offer them something. What could we offer? The parties come into the picture again, we have to provide them with something for the infrastructure. I consider this a beneficial means for us, the earlier we offer it, the more we profit from it; and it improves confidence too. In addition, I think it is useless discussing economic policy, I would cancel the issue from the agenda. The only policy we should adopt is putting an end to the competition of economic claims, because it is not good for them either. Whoever gains parliamentary representation will be in responsible position. They have to understand this. This is the only aim. I don't think that we could come to an agreement in economic policy. But we could agree on the party-law. This requires direct and concrete agreement. The electoral system, the date of elections and the order of legislation are similar issues. They don't seem to be directly interested in the order of legislation now.

In case they do not consider our propositions I don't think that we should wait any longer. We should go on making the planned steps without the Roundtable. Our proposition should make it clear that we talk about the Roundtable of equal partners. I would also refrain from disrupting the Opposition Roundtable, but we state that we do not accept this form of negotiations, we want to include a wider scope of partners. Otherwise we cannot interfere anyway, they can come together if they want. We simply do not negotiate this way, and that is that.

I think that it would be good if we could come forward with these at the 8 May meeting of the Central Committee. In the meantime we agreed that we hold the meeting according to the original plan, on 8 May. If there is no agenda we expect a single-day meeting. So, we should put forward these propositions indicating that as soon as there is mutual interest for agreement, we take the negotiations to a higher level. But not in advance, just as soon as they intend to negotiate. Thank you very much.

Imre Pozsgay: I agree with what we have heard and I accept the summary given by comrade Fejti. I share the view that these negotiations helped us in gaining information and forming our strategy. They have fulfilled their mission. The propositions of comrade Fejti should be considered too, maybe not at today's exploratory talks. I would like to mention a few things too.

Basically I agree with comrade Nyers: we have to come to an agreement with those who can agree, and we have to make this clear at the negotiations. But we cannot burst into things. I only say this, because one thing seems to be absolutely clear – and I suppose that comrade Fejti's experiences support this too – namely, that those organisations who do not define themselves as parties just yet, are the strongest. The organisations that are the most remarkable, that have and rightly claim the biggest impact on public opinion and have come up with the most mature political program (MDF, SZDSZ, FIDESZ) do not define themselves as parties at either Roundtable meetings or bilateral meetings. This is a fact we have to take into consideration during negotiations. It is not by chance that they made this decision – although those who do not want the organisation to become a party are quite frustrated, especially in the MDF – but they surely know why it is good for them. They use tactics against each other too (as comrade Fejti suggested in a slightly different way). It is not good for them if a dozen parties and a handful of disrupted parties remain on the political stage, which can easily be defeated by the MSZMP in the elections. This would be in our interest, but it will not happen, unfortunately. We must consider this. They expect the historic parties to discredit themselves, and they count on this too. Their plan is

to come forward as parties then, and to embody the remnants. The name they decide upon most probably depends on quite a few factors.

So, besides the things we have heard from comrade Nyers and others, I would like to emphasise in front of the Political Committee, that in matters related to the preparation of negotiations and intentions for negotiation, all issues of agreement that the negotiations aim at are in our interest. They serve the interest of the government, let's put it this way, because that's how they see it, so before entering another round of negotiations we have to draw up a concrete plan. We have to make a definite plan about our propositions, about our actions. We have to define the limit: this is how far we go, this is what we can sacrifice for achieving agreement. Anyone who can come to terms with this can be a future partner in coalition. Those who cannot put up with it are not considered to be outside of the law either, but they define themselves as opposition, because we are not confronting a Polish situation.

There are many points of misunderstanding here: in a Polish situation there are no meetings of party politics. In the Polish situation political opposition entered negotiations supporting the movement of trade unions. (*Nyers: and the government was the other partner of negotiations.*) The government was the other partner, yes. So, those who came to an agreement were not political parties. (*Nyers: but they will become parties.*) Yes, they will become parties. Exactly. But they are in a different phase – further than we are – and they negotiated from an absolutely different position. Let's call it a fragile [position]. I don't know what the Minister of National Defence said about this, but I saw in Warsaw, that the time of their negotiations with Jaruzelski was set, and he had to rush to Cardinal Glemph, so that nothing would be crushed there in the hallway. ... So, I think that our position is better. Therefore we should make consistent, thorough and careful preparations. We don't even have to conceal our means and advantages. This way, by the end of May we could come to the end of a successful round of negotiations.

Do not misunderstand me. I do appreciate the work carried out by comrade Fejti and others, but they are aware of it too, that the MSZMP has reserve-forces for this negotiation. This is included in their tactics, or at least this is the conclusion I drew from talks with them.

[...]

György Fejti: I think it would be a good idea to give a summary of what we have done at the meeting of the Central Committee. I would add, that this is exactly what we wanted at the last meeting, I submitted my proposition, but, considering the situation, I withdrew. I think the summary should be given orally, and it could take place here, at the 2 May meeting of the Political Committee. As far as I know, a declaration of the Opposition Roundtable will be published in the meantime, it will be in the press tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, at the latest. So the Central Committee should be flexible and it should reflect the limit to our compromise. Then, this could be discussed on 2 May [...]

I consider the following a theoretical question: we have been emphasising all through, that everyone enters negotiations with whomever they want. In this respect, we have nothing against the opposition Roundtable, but there are two things one cannot do simultaneously: one cannot take part in the negotiations as a sovereign organisation and act as a block at the same time. The two things don't go together, there is no precedent for this in either world history or diplomacy. It is acceptable if these organisations harmonise their views and appoint representatives who negotiate with the MSZMP. This is possible, but then the organisations to which we offered a sovereign position in negotiations must give

up this position. The two things don't go together. This is why the format of the Roundtable is problematic. And it is not by chance, that our Polish friends did not make a compromise in this, although they were in a worse situation. They refused to play the part that the SZDSZ set for us, namely that we would be sitting in the prisoner's box, listening to their lecture. This is one of the points.

The other: it is not wise to mix political meetings and political and state negotiations, because this would result in uncertainty and problems of legitimacy. Representatives of the government can negotiate with representatives of any of the parties. Appointed representatives of the government, commissioned by the MSZMP as its own members, can also take part in the negotiations we have started. But signing something on behalf of the government would cause complications. It is not possible to have the signature of the parties, the government, and the faction of the Parliament outside the party on the very same document. Therefore it would be logical to maintain the present form of negotiations, and an agreement could be legally effected with the present government and according to parliamentary regulations. I consider this issue a top priority, the rest is mere technicality. There we can be flexible, but this issue has to be considered seriously.

Rezső Nyers: I suggest that we should think this over. The MSZMP can appear as a party represented in Parliament, it can even appear with its general secretary. It is an option. I don't say that this is how it should be, but I don't find this problematic. Then we invite the other half of Parliament. [...]

[...]

Károly Grósz: Let's mix these propositions. Well (*Nyers: Yes, yes, yes.*) I don't think the government should sign a document as comrade Fejti suggested. (*Nyers: The government mustn't sign a document, I agree. The government should not take part, yes.*) The party can sign everything. (*Nyers: Yes, yes, yes.*) But not in this form. Thank you. I suggest that we should have a short lunch-break, I ask members of the committee to stay.

Document 20.
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 2, 1989.



Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable
May 2, 1989
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

Péter Tölgyessy: I believe I have to make a detour here. I have to give an account of my feeling that on the one hand MSZMP have not yet considered properly what it wants to do, how it wants to conduct the negotiations, and its representatives were rather uncertain in this respect too. What is even more important, there is a political goal here, they want to slice us up into eight parts. They want to split us into eight parts, and therefore it is very important for them that they suspect we can not send a delegation of three to attend the meeting, so they believe we might have eight different delegations to attend a multisided roundtable, and then they can break us up playing the role of an umpire, as a "great integrator". So the reason why they are so tough here is ...I do not think it is ... I think there are two reasons for it. On the one hand they were not prepared properly, so our very positive proposals made at other forums were useless. On the one hand the three of them were not prepared enough, they had not really worked their way through the issues with the party leaders, this was one reason. The other one was that they had not given up the hope to slice us up into eight parts and make us to discuss with their partner organizations as they like, so that they could come in as a "great integrator" who could tell the truth.

László Sólyom: They knew it wouldn't work...

Péter Tölgyessy: They knew it, but still they didn't want to make any concession.

[...]

Károly Vigh: Can I make a comment? I have been informed – obviously not only me – that the issue of the Roundtable is hotly debated within MSZMP. And luckily these debates have turned into a direction that the reform wing of MSZMP can now see more clearly that the group headed by Fejti is beginning to be more and more incapable of conducting the negotiations. So our hope is not without support that if this is going to be obvious, as we see it now, then in the present situation, when the reformist wing – we of course know that is getting stronger in the country, in Budapest as well as in the countryside – the reformists will take over, and we should consider this possibility, the initiation from Fejti's group, and they will show that they are much more capable of ... with the Roundtable. As we judge them to be obviously more suitable, more suitable to carry on substantial talks within the Roundtable. So I don't think that this toughness and the attitude on the part of Fejti's group are so disastrous. After all, it is also our interest that we sit down to talk with people – in this case with the reform wing of MSZMP, as it has been mentioned here before – with whom we can hope to achieve some kind of agreement – not in the least for the sake of the whole country.

[...]

György Szabad: Provided that they have the possibility to make decisions within the government. For it is one thing to be fraternal, and it is another thing to make an agreement.

Károly Vigh: Yes, so this is the information I've received, that a stronger group is being organized within MSZMP – these are the exact words I have heard, a stronger group is being formed – than the present one. The strength is not considered to be political.

Péter Tölgyessy: Unfortunately I also have to make a detour. It has been raised in the course of the negotiations that we are bloody fools, and we are running a campaign against poor MSZMP.

László Sólyom: It is not us ...

Péter Tölgyessy: Well, it is not, but ... but we are also part of it. (*Anna Richter: We stop the press campaign.*) But this is not what I want to speak about but rather about the fact that they took offense at the statement of Bálint Magyar and Kónya (Imre), just about this matter. [In their view] we want to interfere with the internal affairs of MSZMP, we want to negotiate with the reform wing, we favor the reform wing, and we do not favor the other wing – and they resented it deeply. So we should not interfere with their internal affairs. I believe when we issue a communiqué we have to be careful in stating who we consider to be better...

Viktor Orbán: I would like to say that I believe if we agree not to talk with MSZMP on the other side of the table [...] then this could weaken our arguments significantly. So we should not miss out on the argument that power is still with the party. We don't care about the Women's Council, the National Council of Trade Unions and the government, because these are all their extensions. And this argument can not be defeated publicly. They simply cannot say that the government is independent from the party when the Prime Minister is member of the Politburo. So I believe (*interruptions, noise*) But that is what they say, yes... I think this argument, if we point out these overlaps, nothing can be done against it before the public. I believe that everybody in the country thinks about this today the same way as we do. We think about it on the basis of some analysis, but the people simply know how it is. It happens what the party says to happen. In my view we should not miss out on this chance of negotiating with the party directly, because if we say that they are representatives of the party and the government, we soon might find ourselves in a situation that the next meeting will be attended only by members of the government, and the authority of the people sitting on the other side will decrease continuously. So we should insist that the people sitting at the table should represent the party, authorized by the CC. We should not make any concession on this. This is my opinion. Because this way we can make a good case.

Document 21.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 2, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee

May 2, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[Subject:] **Report on the experiences of the debate concerning the party law**

György Fejti: Considering that comrade Szűrös and others have brought up that this law is difficult to handle alone – despite the fact that negotiations with the Opposition Roundtable are mentioned under „miscellaneous” – I would like to tell you now that these expert consultations are under way. Multilateral ones, bilateral ones, there will be one this afternoon as well. And although the separate organisations are more and more willing to begin substantial work, but for the moment the Alliance of Free Democrats is able to hold the opposition roundtable together. And the negotiating position of the Alliance of Free Democrats is rather rigid in matters of content as well.

What do I mean? They do not wish to negotiate about the party law either. Their position is that the party law is not needed, the law on association needs to be amended in stead. And it is of no use to make separate laws dealing with organisations in the category of associations. They are now practically isolated with this view, all the other organisations are inclined to discuss the party law. They categorically reject the Constitutional Court... They believe that a normal court registration should be effected, the Constitutional Court is not needed, and the institution cannot be established before designing the new Constitution, and it cannot be established in this parliamentary term.

They also reject the Presidential Republic system. And so on, and so on. So, for the time being, their position is absolutely destructive. The other organisations of the Opposition Roundtable are ill at ease because it is increasingly obvious that two or three organisations have taken them as hostages. But there will be a point of decision some time. Solidarity still exists, moreover not just solidarity, but, as it turned out at the event at the Jurta Theatre on the 1st of May, it is more than just solidarity. Well, we need to find our way out of this stalemate.

So, how do we see ourselves coming out of it? As we were commissioned, to do this for the meeting of the Central Committee on the 8th – on one hand – we would prepare an oral report about where we stand. Several talks will take place until the 8th. Taking them into account, but partly independently as well, the MSZMP negotiating delegation would develop a clear statement of a flexible position which would issued after the meeting of the Central Committee, as several present here have mentioned, and as comrade Nyers has insisted as well. As I see it, since consultations are held almost every day, the deadlock can be broken until Monday. But it is conceivable that organisations which insist on their original position shall be left out of the negotiation rounds. (*Interjection: Doesn't matter*). Doesn't matter, but it starts to become problematic if other organisations, by any chance, declare their solidarity with them. So, if the opposition roundtable remains, then we will have to wait, and we will need nerves of steel. Although this is not a case of not being proactive regarding their proposals, but a case of dictates, and unacceptable dictates. Well, at the Central Committee meeting this ...

Rezső Nyers: I received a proposal to perhaps convene the former coalition parties to a separate meeting.

Károly Grósz: Yes, they are struggling. I am negotiating with them as well.

Rezső Nyers: It is worth considering.

György Fejti: Anyhow, until this block exists, negotiations have a lot of obstacles, because I have a feeling that the Alliance of Free Democrats will try to increase the tension as much as possible. They are not in a hurry. And I have to say that negotiations are now monopolised (*Rezső Nyers: a small group*) by two or three people in the Alliance of Free Democrats as well. (*Rezső Nyers: Yes, that's right*). So, it is not a matter of the organisations in the Opposition Roundtable having a position about controversial issues. It is clear: there is no position. Two or three people monopolise it, and they can influence the mood of others leading to insoluble problems.

Well, regarding the specific law, or rather the work of the Ministry of Justice in preparing a draft: this Central Committee position will naturally state that we want these negotiations, political negotiations. I mean the MSZMP. And we want the substantial work to begin in this respect. We have to express our way of seeing why this could not happen earlier. Apart from this, I find it absolutely appropriate that the Ministry of Justice should use the classical methods as well. So, the publishing of draft bills is not harmful in any way, even if we don't call these social debates.

Why haven't the drafts about the institutions of the constitutional judges or the President of the Republic been published so far? Mainly because we didn't want it to become yet another premise for accusing us of being impatient with the Opposition Roundtable. We agreed with comrade Kulcsár's team to wait until today, but in order for these organisations not to feel provoked by the Ministry of Justice publishing the other drafts as well even if they oppose it – because they expressed their dissent after promulgating the party law although they opposed it. But if the beginnings of the substantial negotiations will be delayed further then it will be necessary for the Ministry of Justice to make these drafts public. And it is also necessary to propose to any of these organisations, moreover to send it to them officially to ask for their opinion. As the two matters are not mutually exclusive.

So, trying to build political relations, and getting the draft and not learning of it only from the press are two different things. And if they respond by saying that they do not consider the Ministry of Justice competent in this matter, then on one hand that would be rather impolite and on the other hand the public would certainly have their opinion about their negotiating experience. Well, it would not be too good to make a habit of such declarations. I mean declarations which question the legislative intentions and competence of a public administration body.

So, the important issues in the debate are what is not included in the law. That is, that it shouldn't be discriminative whether in a positive or negative sense. That is, it shouldn't set forth restrictions on the right of association based on profession, occupation and it shouldn't limit where parties can or cannot be established. All organisations should provide for this in their internal regulations. I could agree with this, to create the law in this spirit. But debate will continue about this, and I think it would be necessary, not for the first time either, for the Central Committee meeting to debate this as well. The pros and cons should be vocalised. Together with organisational solutions, if possible.

I would like to mention here that a heated debate should be expected about property, the political infrastructure. So, not about the form of election support or the financing of organisations after the elections. This can be agreed upon. It is a very sensitive matter whether we, ourselves, will be able to account for the origins of our property. I suppose that more or less we can. But we are not up to date on this, because a

rather aggressive campaign is under way in this respect, and the obligation to account for it is present in the public opinion in at least three forms. And it doesn't help that the historical parties, who are demanding – only orally for the moment – the restitution of their property, these parties are basically unable to account for it either. So, most real estate properties which they had used, they didn't buy with party dues, just like we didn't either. But this matter is not settled. We should have documentation to show that we have nothing to hide from the public in this matter. Because as long as they feel that there is some kind of manipulation going on or that we are plotting to retain our property, we will be in a defensive situation. Therefore, as a separate issue from the party law, I would think it necessary to, or for the Government to make a gesture of good will, as we have discussed previously, to allow for the development of the basic infrastructure of registered parties.

[...]

[later]

György Fejti: So the talks about technical preparation are in process. Last week, on Saturday, negotiations were held with the representatives of the Opposition Roundtable, and at 4 in the afternoon today these negotiations on the technicalities will continue about the role, concept, thematic structure of the Forum. Parallel to this I met with the President and General Secretary of the New March Front, the representative of the Presidium of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, on Thursday I will meet with the President of the People's Party. And this week I will be in contact with the leaders of the Smallholders' Party and the Social Democratic Party.

In my experience, I would like to stress, the set up, that is the Opposition Roundtable is becoming increasingly uncomfortable for the members. Primarily because the Alliance of Free Democrats and FIDESZ put them under constant pressure. They told me that as the elections are drawing closer, participation in the Opposition Roundtable is becoming less and less attractive to them, since they are going to be competitors in the elections, and in order to be able to present a well defined manifesto everyone would have to start concentrating on their own identity, not on bringing their views closer. Nevertheless it is still alive and the points of debate will persist today as well.

For the moment, the Opposition Roundtable insists on its proposal to hold bilateral negotiations, and refuses to discuss certain issues. I have already spoke to you about which issues are concerned. We have some information about the meeting on Saturday. It was evident there, what I referred to, that the historical parties are increasingly distancing themselves from the Opposition Roundtable. So it is a matter of time before this thing will turn around. Maybe it will turn around by the time of the Central Committee meeting, and it will be possible to annul the current differences of opinion. And this week something will or might happen everyday. Therefore, we propose to have a short oral report at the Central Committee meeting about how far things have progressed and to submit a written proposal on behalf of the MSZMP negotiating delegation which we would publish and which we would send to the leaders of the organisations together with a polite covering letter in order for the internal solidarity of the Opposition Roundtable not to hinder us.

Comrade Nyers mentioned that the historical parties have referred indirectly to the necessity of such trilateral or quadrilateral meetings. We are not averse to this, moreover we are willing, although this form doesn't really solve [anything]. So at the most it presents an opportunity to talk about how to come out of this stalemate.

Károly Grósz: Thank you. Comrades, tell me your impressions, since you sit there, about how to handle this. Tell me.

Géza Kótai: I would like to add that while the Political Committee was working here we agreed that probably on Thursday I will meet with the smallholders, with the opposition [so] not with those who attended the meeting. My impression is – as we have discussed at the latest meeting of the Political Committee as well – that this is, in effect, an action unit. They haven't regulated their relative positions and they haven't developed a hierarchy among themselves. They are in agreement about snatching away as much as possible from MSZMP. But when they more or less achieve this, they will decide on who gets which chunk, and we already see signs of this. We hope that our analysis is correct. I believe that we should continue this cautious, calm attitude and we need to make some kind of gestures – staying within the bounds of our principles – in a way as to be ahead of things – I agree with this wholeheartedly – and to help them, especially these historical parties, traditional parties, in developing the dominance of a feeling of responsibility. Without, of course, abusing their situation. So it seems to me, personally as well, that perhaps we gain more this time by being flexible, more flexible, and being proactive. So I would be absolutely in favour. This is how I feel, I see things.

Pál Tétényi: Comrades! I negotiated now, on Sunday, with this wing of the Smallholders' Party, that is those who have attended the Opposition Roundtable, with the leader of this delegation, who is the Vice-President of the party, with László Kovács. He said that they reached a certain agreement with the Borsos group, that is the other wing, on Saturday. The party's national committee meeting will be held at the end of the month, on the 27th I think, and he believes that they have a chance to create their unity there. He confirmed again that this section is ready to co-operate and they want this co-operation. But he stressed again that the situation with the younger generation is much more difficult, and he urged us to try to reach an agreement with them. Not the section, but the current, currently existing leadership.

I agree with comrade Fejti's words as well, and I think that this flexibility is very important at the negotiations, and linked to this, the effort to be able to sit down for talks in different settings is also important. Undoubtedly, the setting up of this big conciliatory forum is the final aim of the negotiation preparations, but I consider the intermediary steps to be important as well. Because it seems to me that although especially the historical parties undoubtedly feel more and more uncomfortable, there is a certain solidarity effort or solidarity constraint for confrontation against the MSZMP. To me it seems that none of the parties are free of this. All groupings are afraid of getting into a situation that a negative judgement would be passed on them as a result of acting as our partners. So I believe that we have to take this process into consideration as well, since if I think back to the original bilateral talks, now the tone is undoubtedly harsher than back then, the demands are escalating. Since demands, like the ones put forward at the latest Roundtable, existed only in an embryonic form or not at all before. I mean things like the demand to start talks about Bős-Nagymaros, or this demand – which is not formally voiced yet, but which came up, if the information in the TV yesterday was correct – that they demand to have international supervision at the elections, which I consider to be without precedent. I might be wrong, but as far as I know there was no direct international supervision even in 1945 when the Allied Supervising Committee (*Pozsgay: Then the Allied Supervising Committee...*) was here, but I don't know if it did it. There was no direct supervision and there wasn't one in 1947 either when the peace treaty wasn't ratified by all great powers

yet. So I refer to it just as an example, I don't know how serious this demand is, that came up at the meeting.

So all this brings me to the same conclusion as well, that we have to strive with utmost flexibility to technically prepare the negotiations in order to reach the phase of substantial negotiations and we need to use very varied settings for this. Including many intimate meetings, bilateral meetings, between two or three people. Thank you very much.

Károly Grósz: Thank you very much. Comrades, go on, who has a remark or comment. Comrade Nyers.

Rezső Nyers: I agree with what has been said about our general attitude. I think we have to emphasise externally – and the Central Committee statement of position will be adequate for this purpose as well, but several times if necessary – with dignity and not with such sought after concessions, that we want to negotiate, we want a fair deal, to have fair, competitive elections and informal negotiations without restrictive conditions. This is what we need to emphasise, not the extraordinary state of affairs, but the politically undisturbed transition toward a pluralistic system. Well, these need to be emphasised. If we are the ones to emphasise this, and if we manage to convince the public, so primarily the public, not the radical representatives of the Opposition Roundtable, that we are serious about this, and we demonstrate it, then our endeavour alone will bring us success sooner or later. And we will be doubly successful if some people will join. And I am convinced that some people will join.

I miss the effort on our part to analyse specifically their real political aims. The ultra-radicals do not need to be analysed in detail, that is just fantasy, they are not fighting to achieve realistic political aims. Bős-Nagymaros, and such practical matters, are separate issues, in my view. This has a symbolic significance at the Roundtable, because this is not the issue. The issue is transition to a pluralistic system, the constitution and the election law etc. So this is out of place here, I mean Bős-Nagymaros. It has to be rejected, it does not belong here.

The question of Bős-Nagymaros is a big problem for us, for the government (*Károly Grósz: Yes, of course, for the government*), a big problem for the government, because whether we go on with it or not, either way it can be our undoing. The question is which way will it be less problematic. So, we are to declare this to be a government issue, government and parliamentary issue, not an issue of the parties.

So, I believe we haven't analysed in great enough depth what the others hope to gain by accepting this radical rule. They hope for some real political gains. It has already been hinted at that they want to squeeze something out of the MSZMP. What is it that they want us to give up exactly? We cannot formulate our strategy until we know this, we can only make general statements. For certain, one aspect is their fear of the MSZMP. The radicalism springs from their fear. They are afraid that we are manoeuvring, they are afraid that they are going to be left with nothing. Well, we can't say that this is unfounded, that it is foolish to base on fear... it would be as if we were afraid of them, and then we would start to wave our sword, right?, that would be just as foolish. That is foolish too. The traditional parties which have a foreseeable, stable base of supporters, it seems to be around 10% of the voters, the traditional parties have this. Maybe, one of them will have 20%. What was that? (*Interjection: Each*) Each. No, it's not possible for any of them to have 20%, alone, according to the opinion polls. (*Károly Grósz: Yes, it cites 36% for us*) In the order of 10%. (*Károly Grósz: 10-13*) I am sure about 10% for the smallholders, their historical reputation carries them. I am sure about around 10% for the social democrats,

they are also carried by their historical reputation. This is not so true of the Peasants' Party, this 10%. The results of the Democratic People's party and the Pfeifert Party cannot be forecasted, because these were created very much in the heat of the moment in '47, and I think that they have not become rooted in the memory or the mind of the electorate. But these will scrape together something as well. But these two parties will definitely come to an agreement with the MSZMP if we are fair in our dealings. I say the same for the Peasants' Party too, just a little... they should definitely agree.

I propose to prepare an analysis before the meeting of the Central Committee, after all, we have an information base. So we should explore the ground about their concrete aims. Do they have any concrete aims relating to the drawing up of the Constitution? What should we agree upon regarding the Constitution? They have articulated views against the Constitutional Court. Then they have expressed dissent about a powerful President of the Republic. This happened at the March Front, right?, they came forward with their views, and the tide has turned, because up to that point all were in favour of this, the rapid elections, and there we suddenly realised that what this, SZDSZ has turned around, MDF wasn't there, they are/ were the least revealed to us. But what I know is limited as well if we look at it this way, private discussions... limited. Károly Ravasz's group and Kovács, as they called them, they are always signalling to us – by us I now mean the March Front – that they wish to co-operate. They support the Roundtable, they support the National Committee, as much as they do. The former Peasants' Party representatives are constructive too during private consultations. So, I propose to conduct informal talks to explore the ground. Perhaps on a higher level on an ad hoc basis, with the minimum of formalities. Just exploring the grounds a bit. Comrade Fejti's team should continue the preparations here. We should influence them on a personal level too. I can't say how this should be done.

Károly Grósz: Well, I'm in correspondence with the Smallholders' Party, we arranged a rendezvous.

Rezső Nyers: In think the best thing would be if comrade Grósz found a...

Károly Grósz: I met with the Peasant's party.

Rezső Nyers: So let me say that maybe the former coalition parties...this...

Károly Grósz: Only SZDSZ and the Social Democratic Party are not accounted for.

Rezső Nyers: Well, the Social Democratic Party is... so it doesn't need to be considered in this relation. So, we should find the informal setting, but I stress not formal, ceremonious or public [setting]. Mustn't be public.

Károly Grósz: The meeting was private as well.

Rezső Nyers: There should be a small Roundtable, so not bilateral. Let's try this. I don't think this would jeopardise our prestige.

Károly Grósz: Rather it doesn't seem too useful, so the usefulness is questionable.

Rezső Nyers: But yes, we have to explore what they – really, these serious people – what

they really hope for, what they want. So we get to know the hard core, who are really important to us. So this would be the point. Furthermore it would be a personal influence. This is important, we are on the scene.

Károly Grósz: Go ahead.

Géza Kótai: I apologise for demanding the floor and interrupting. The things I say are only hypotheses. As comrade Nyers says, of course it would be good to know what their realistic policy is. However, I think that this is terribly difficult, because they themselves do not know it exactly either. I don't want to simplify or vulgarise the issue, but it seems to me, that they want to obtain a better position. This is the reason for their opposition. And the other thing, that comrade Nyers said. (Rezső Nyers: Yes, yes, but where do they want a better position?) Well, in the percentage, naturally. And this is based on opposition, on rejecting the existing practice and the MSZMP. And most of all, their fear, as comrade Nyers said too, they fear that we deceive them.

So somehow – in their interpretation, of course, not in our interpretation or not according to universal values – they would try to have a fair play, but they defeat their purpose by going to the other extreme, and they do things that comrade Tétényi and others talked about. So it is rightful, but it is terribly difficult to see what their realistic policy is about. The most we can come up with is the hypothesis, that they want to obtain a better position at the elections by way of opposition. And I think that this is the reason for their hesitation concerning the elections and for their quarrels among themselves. These are there in the Social Democratic Party as well as in the Smallholders' Party. They cannot decide what is the most beneficial for them, how to make ten percent from those ten percents. Or a bit more.

But if this happens, let me remark, that I think the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) can expect more, regardless of the fact that they haven't declared themselves as a party yet (*interruption cannot be understood*). That's why – and it seems to me, that the members of the Political Committee have reached a consensus in this – they do have a kind of fear, an anxiety of forty years of being deceived and double-crossed, it doesn't matter how I put it. So we might make some kind of a gesture, I do not know exactly what. In my opinion it might help the negotiation if we showed that we are unhesitant and formed a certain concept, of course on theoretical basis, making non-theoretical allowances, so that they would feel the limits, they would see that we are not in such a bottleneck situation to agree to everything. If the party, the MSZMP, made a kind of gesture, on a higher level like this, even if that didn't influence or release the tension in them significantly, it would make the MSZMP appear in another or even better light in front of society, the public, before the elections: that we were willing to do anything to solve these contradictions. So, I am sorry for interrupting.

Károly Grósz: All right, but the question is, what is this gesture? Politically we cannot make use of a non-official bilateral meeting with them. Both meetings were to be confidential. I had to agree to this, and I have to keep to this. When they say that it can be public, then it will be public. We owe this much to each other. I think that neither of them know just yet, how far they want to come with us. My conclusion was, from both meetings, that here is a terrible struggle. And, actually there was no fundamental discrepancy between us regarding content. Content was not... Therefore I couldn't really locate the problem. What is more, we really had a nice chat. (*Rezső Nyers: In foreign policy, quite close.*) Quite. There was nothing, I mentioned the issue. I felt that their

opinion changed from the time we wrote to them and we exchanged letters, to the present personal meeting only regarding the elections. Earlier they wanted to put the date of the elections forward, now they want to postpone it. I have the letter here. Here you are.

Ilona Tatai: This might not be a very competent question, but what do we really want? Well, as for me, I think it would be terribly important to declare that we want them to be real operating parties. Now there are quite a few of them, naturally this number will decrease. What kind of sharing do we think of? So I think a rough ratio should be defined. Now, this also means that the fate of certain ministries could be decided.

So, shouldn't we form our own standpoint, shouldn't we see what we want? Then we could declare, that this is how far we go, and we are terribly daring and brave, and we keep to this as long as we can. But at the moment I don't really see what we want. So, do we want the MSZMP to have all the ministries and a 70% majority in Parliament, or are we satisfied with 51%? So what do we concentrate on? I suppose, when we talk with our partners or opponents, or with whoever, we should clearly see what we want. Then we might have to give up some of it, we might not have to go that far, but we have to set some kind of a limit for ourselves. It disturbs me, that maybe we are not so sure what we want.

Károly Grósz: Well, I don't think we have reached this point yet. I don't think so. We are not that far (*Tatai: Aren't we?*) in this issue.

György Fejti: Both of these are basic questions. It would be desirable to know what we want, and we asked this question two months ago. And we have some information about what the organisations want. Well, there is a fixed point: the organisations want to have as many mandates as possible, assuming as little responsibility in advance as possible. This is clear. Well, they are rivals of each other too in this respect, if they want as many mandates as possible. Therefore I don't see a chance for coalition in the election. It is quite likely, and quite a few organisations have said so, that it is risky for each party to measure itself, but it is the MSZMP that takes the greatest risk. So none of the organisations really risks a lot.

For a while the historic parties have been considering the idea of forming a coalition with the MSZMP for the elections. This idea was discarded. So, today nobody wants to form a coalition for the elections on a national level. Every party wants to get measured, because they think that this is in their own interest.

Well, what else do they want? Well, as many mandates as possible. Therefore, all the organisations are interested most in the party-law, more specifically in the political infrastructure, that is, they want to have their conditions. They are also interested in the press and in the publicity. This is what they are interested in. Because these are the main conditions of the basic objective, of being represented in Parliament as much as possible.

What else do they want? Well, they all want to build and develop themselves as an organisation, as well as the movement of parties that have a kind of concept and have already defined themselves. In this respect, I have to say, that the historic parties are at the most premature stage, because they show the biggest personal discrepancies. Therefore, I have to say, that internal discrepancies are so significant in the Social Democratic Party and in the Smallholders' Party, that they are more concerned with organising themselves than with the timing of the Roundtable. To tell the truth, individuals represent position on behalf of the parties, but without being controlled by the management of the parties. This is true even in the case of the Hungarian Democratic Forum.

So the parties, except for the Alliance of Free Democrats, do not have a definite

concept about these negotiations. This creates a situation where the Alliance of Free Democrats controls the Opposition Roundtable. So, what does the Alliance of Free Democrats want besides what has been mentioned? They want to impose a significant pressure on the MSZMP, they want to disorganise the present structure of power, but only as long as there is no danger of a left shift. And if they fear something, it is a change of this kind in the MSZMP. This is why they lay so much emphasis on depoliticising the power-enforcement organisations. This is why the position of the MSZMP in the People's Army and in Domestic Affairs is on the agenda. This is why the Workers' Militia is in the centre of attention. It is there in the press, that arms are scattered around the country, and these are mostly in the possession of communists. So the fear that the situation might get out of hand, the fear of violence is justified. The Alliance of Free Democrats and FIDESZ want to push the MSZMP to the limit, keep it under pressure, disrupt it. This is their definite aim. They clearly state that they are not interested in any kind of co-operation. What is more, they regard all kinds of collaboration as co-operation. The SZDSZ, when being moderate, talks about the role of a constructive opposition. Their extremists talk about confrontation. As I mentioned it last time, the Hungarian Democratic Forum does not see that co-operation would be in its interest in the short-run. They clearly stated that they don't think that direct co-operation would be in their own interest. And they don't consider themselves ready for co-operation in coalition after the elections either. They are not interested in this problem. One of their representatives put it this way last week: they are not interested in one or two ministries or departments of the under-secretary of state, because they have a lot to lose if they enter a coalition. They consider 1995. Then this is absolutely clear to me.

Well then, what do we want? On the one hand we want to expand the basis of legislation. And this is a minimal program. This means that the legitimisation of Parliament, which was initiated, would be supplemented. This is what we want. Obviously, we, want a peaceful transition too. And in order to ensure peaceful transition, we want to decrease distrust, we are looking for the links that could decrease the fear of a left shift. We want to ask the organisations to guarantee that violence of a non-military nature will not occur. So social demagogy, and the worsening of social tension would not induce violence. This is the reason why we encourage talks about economic and socio-political issues, although there is debate concerning this within the Political Committee, but if these organisations rightly fear a left shift, then our fear, that we might not be able to control the worsening of social tension, is also quite valid. So we have to find guarantees for both. And it is in our own interest to establish a government of wider scope after the elections with those who are willing to co-operate in coalition. Therefore, it is also important from this respect to continue talks about economic and socio-political issues, even if these debates are not concluded before the elections. So, these are the objectives we set for ourselves.

So, where do our interests overlap? In avoiding violence. Overlapping is obvious here. Historic parties, especially the Peasants' Party, show their willingness to enter coalition. In the case of the Social Democratic Party, it really depends on whom we talk to. On 1 May, their spokesman clearly rejected coalition. The president has a different opinion, and the president's son holds yet another view, etc. (Interruption cannot be understood.) Yes, yes, a definite idea. These parties wait till after elections before doing anything – and we have to understand this. So everything depends on how many votes the MSZMP can collect. Well, there are debates concerning this, because at the last meeting of the Roundtable, they discussed the issue of bringing the date of the elections forward. Interestingly the MDF, the Smallholders' Party and most of the Social Democratic Party

agreed to bringing the date of the elections forward. The Alliance of Free Democrats and FIDESZ are the only ones now who are definitely against this. They think that there is a danger that the MSZMP might scrape together 60% of the votes, if they cannot organise themselves in time, which would be an impossible situation.

Károly Grósz: Yes, please. Comrade Vastagh.

Pál Vastagh: I don't know where to start, the issues we talked about relate to so many things. It seems that these political organisations do not have definite forms and systems of connections to be able to say the same thing in Csongrád county and Budapest. Therefore, the most important question for me is, to what extent we can make autonomous political steps and initiatives. The political landscape remains colourful and varied as long as this structure is not established and the party hierarchy, which can transfer political ideas further down the line, is not developed. The political atmosphere of a city, the political atmosphere of the capital and the political situation of the countryside provide different experiences.

Two representatives of county-level from the Peoples' Party visited me last week. We had a long discussion and they showed an outstanding willingness for constructive co-operation. Twenty-two representatives of different churches met, including the Bishop of Vác, the Greek Catholic Bishop, the Evangelical Bishop and the Unitarian Bishop. They unanimously held the opinion that the activities of the church or the inner religious work should not be set against the MSZMP. To put it in a simple way, the Church is not likely to conduct an open attack from the pulpit against the MSZMP. This covers a very important section in the life of the countryside.

The Peoples' Party sent its recruiting letter to all presidents of co-operative farms and to the Association of Co-operative Farms. There is no trace of the Peoples' Party in the communities. Of course, it is really difficult to measure this properly. One can only try to define the situation by relying on impressions and factual experiences. It is a pity we don't have better means for the political or social analysis of voters' behaviour. [...] we would be better informed, if these factual experiences could be compared to an intensive work of this kind within the party, if we could put more energy into public-opinion polls.

So I think, that regardless of the differentiated political scene, we are not in such a bad situation after all. I think there is a great gap between the political atmosphere of the countryside and the political atmosphere of big cities. Institutionalisation of these political organisations are slower than the political atmosphere might imply. The number of representatives at the statutory meeting of the Social Democratic Party at Szeged was not 13. There are 40-50 members of the Smallholders' Party at Szeged. And there are members in Vásárhely, Makó, and the MDF ... scattered around the country ... I don't mean that the MDF is an indicator of absolute value, but they have less than 1000-1200 members in the county of Csongrád, including Szeged.

So, if we take into consideration everything that has been said, our situation might not prove to be so distressing as it seemed from regarding other aspects. Even more so, if the Party could prepare its members to face the battle of the elections with more self-confidence. I suggest, also on behalf of my colleagues, that the Political Committee should give some kind of guidance to the first secretaries of the counties regarding the options of local political activities and the room for political manoeuvre of the MSZMP. Whether the qualifying arguments you mentioned are also true for the organisations there, and to what extent they can influence the position of the Party.

[...]

Imre Pozsgay: It is hard for me to to speak because all I can say is that we are not a bit further than we were two weeks ago. It is not a major problem, I know, but I am afraid that what we considered with optimism two weeks ago is somewhat less promising today. I am still convinced about what I said at the time, namely that MSZMP will be the centrepiece of events in the future, everything will be organised around it, provided that MSZMP – allow me to use the term that one of our opponents did – pulls itself together in due time. They also know that at the moment there is no other factor that helps orientation in our society, in our country. I am not blaming ourselves for this – we simply could not get any further, that's there to it. Apparently the connections necessary for our advance did not formulate in the past two weeks. As our concept has turned – with good reason – towards free elections and the advance of elections, so has their concept changed as well. It was a revelatory information for them to learn that we still consider ourselves at the helm. This is the kind of stalemate situation that we discussed a while ago. The first experiment was 15 March, a trial of self-definition, the other experiment is the one we just had on 1 May. I don't think they got any further than us in this respect, as far as I could tell from the events. The haven't moved forward a bit. None the less, I agree with comrade János Lukács that the country should get ahead and leave this stalemate behind because things only change if we get this stalemate behind. We are well aware of the circumstances and correlations, no need to go into details now. So I would like to briefly touch upon the subject of what to do, giving you my opinion on our affairs.

I accept the proposition of the committee headed by comrade Fejti: let them continue with due tolerance the negotiations and the preparation of a large-scale summit. I fully sympathise with the idea of comrade Nyers, namely that in the meantime another... a team of another level should seek communication with them; perhaps they are not willing to, though. It should happen until the whole affair is made public, because I think it is in the interest of the majority of them that it happens in an official form and in public. Certain meetings (*Károly Grósz: Hegedűs agreed and Boross agreed as well.*) They promise that they come and see me. All the same, I happen to visit some of them occasionally but they are not willing to co-operate in the organisation of a multilateral summit. We should try it but also be prepared for failure.

We should get to know what is at stake here. Namely what is at stake at such an event. Comrade Ilona Tatai raised the issue and expressed what we actually want, and comrade Fejti partly gave his reflections.



Document 22.

Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary
[Gorbachev has "no idea which way we are heading"].
May 2, 1989.



Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary
May 2, 1989

Inside me depression and alarm are growing, the sense of crisis of the Gorbachevian Idea. He is prepared to go far. But what does it mean? His favorite catch-word is "unpredictability." And most likely we will come to a collapse of the state and something like chaos. He feels that he is losing the levers of power irreversibly, and this realization prevents him from "going far." For that reason he holds to conventional methods but acts with "velvet gloves." He has no concept of where we are going. His declarations about socialist values, ideals of October, as he begins to tick them off, sound as irony for the cognoscenti. Behind them - emptiness.

From Anatoly Chernyaev. "1991. The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR" (Moscow: TERRA, 1997)

*Translated by Vladislav Zubok
National Security Archive*



Document 23.
Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
[György Fejti on the principles of the Party Law].
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 8, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
[György Fejti on the principles of the Party Law].

May 8, 1989

Verbatim Record (Excerpt).

Comrade György Fejti: Dear Comrades! As I referred to it earlier I would like to speak about the party-law in a wider context.

After the session of the Central Committee scheduled on the 20th and 21st of February besides the management of the economic crisis the most important issue of the internal affairs has turned to be the political and legal grounding of a smooth transition to the representational democracy that is based on a multi-party system instead of the present one-party system. The elections of representatives to the Parliament and to local governments that we are looking forward to will be an undoubtedly significant stage in this unbroken and gradual transition. To be able to make feasible a free and democratic election that is based on the competition of various parties the following conditions are necessary in legal terms: a law that designates the principles of establishing a party, running it in administrative terms and managing it in terms of finances; the registration of the parties; a Constitutional Court that controls the management of the parties based on the Constitution; an institution of the president of the republic that would – as we hope – have a stabilizing role in the political transition and finally there is a need for a law of suffrage that contains the principles and the concrete procedures of the election.

I would like to inform the Central Committee, that in the recent past the Political Committee has already discussed a draft that centered on these questions. According to the principles that were laid down in the concept of regulating the Constitution and were introduced to and accepted by the members of the Central Committee the principles of the law concerning the Constitutional Court and the institution of the president of the republic have already been discussed. These two bills will be introduced to the public in the next few days, or if I am correct the bill concerning the Constitutional Court has already been published in the newspapers. We will distribute these bills today among the members of the Central Committee. After reading it first the Political Committee agreed upon the principles of the law of suffrage, however we have to conduct further consultations concerning it within the party and with those oppositional organizations that are likely to become participants of the next election. After finishing these consultations can we submit the principles of the law of suffrage to the Central Committee. The Parliament's approval to the above listed laws would provide on a full scale the legal conditions for a free and democratic election that is based on the competition of the parties. However, the scheduling of the election – partly independently from the above mentioned conditions – has to be considered profoundly and cautiously in political terms. Of course we have to conduct consultations concerning this issue with the parties and the future parties. Presently the situation is not mature yet to designate the date of the election, but it seems to be practical, or it seems necessary to start a discussion within the Central Committee about the necessity of designating the date of the election and about a possible favorable date.

It is well known that the assignment of the Parliament will be terminated on the 8th of June, 1989.

According to the mandates of the Constitution a new Parliament has to be set up no later than three months after the election. The Constitution also ensures the right that the Parliament announces its adjournment before the end of its assignment.

Until now the setting of the date of the election was nothing else but a simple practical matter. Now it became a political question of decisive political importance, since the timing might have an impact on our own results in the election. As every other party in the world would do that is in governing position, we as well have to turn into our own advantage the opportunity that lies in setting the date of the election.

The Political Committee has come to the conclusion that we may seriously have to consider of rescheduling the date of the election of parliamentary representatives to late fall of 1989, that is, to the end of October, the beginning of November. This move should not be made because it would primarily serve our Party's interests, but rather because it would be a response to the continuously regenerated and gradually increasing pressure on the Parliament that comes from certain oppositional organizations.

This pressure has challenged the legitimacy of the Parliament and cannot arrest the efforts aiming at destabilizing the present Parliament. It seems that these efforts geared a process that cannot be stopped any more, the Parliament whose authority and competence were questioned tries to get even with the Government. The conditions for a firm, consistent conduct of Government that would be supported by the Parliament and would be necessary in the country's present economical and financial situation cannot be guaranteed for the above listed reasons. The power relation within the Parliament are becoming more and more unpredictable. The danger that the situation becomes uncontrollable is present which would drift us further towards the direction of financial and economical breakdown.

The various phenomena that are related to the present condition of the party, that is, the intensification of the processes of disintegration within the party would also support the opinion according to the election should be scheduled to an earlier date. In the condition of the real or imagined, continuous surrendering of our Party, our readiness for action, our spiritual and political state seem to be weakening gradually. In order to stop the further disintegration and despair within the party there would be a necessity to set concrete, clear, intelligible goals for the members of the party that would provide guidelines for action.

It seems that an election that is based on competition could become a battlefield for our Party, since – although the situation is complicated – it would provide a clear goal. To be able to correct the mistakes we had made in the previous period and to take a serious role in the establishment of the democratic socialism we have to be successful in the election. Our minimum program should be that we become the biggest party, while our maximum program should be that we strive at gaining the absolute majority. This program would help us to establish the conditions for founding a firm majority within the Parliament and for shaping a stable structure for a coalitional government. The economical condition of the country would also urge the rescheduling of the election for an earlier date.

In the beginning of the next year we will have to introduce some measures that will spoil the disposition of the population as well as will toughen the conditions of their lives. Unlike that, in this year if we do not make any further blunders, we may be able to stop or assuage the population's anxiety. Moreover, within the limits of economic rationality we may want to think about working out and implementing measures that would improve temporarily the mood of the social groups that have a crucial role in the election.

Obviously there are counter arguments as well against the scheduling of the election to an earlier date. First of all, I have to mention that the political stratification of the society is quite rudimentary.

The different parties and future parties need time to be able to define themselves, to establish their own structure and organizational framework. To be able to provide this necessary time for them – and it was a theme in the discussions we were conducting with these futures parties – we should be primarily loyal to the present conditions of the Parliament (Government). We cannot accept two contradictory things at the same time. It is impossible to demand the resignation of the Government, to question the legitimacy of the present Parliament day by day or to restrict its competency to deal with only certain questions and at the same time to expect the governing party to be self repressing by taking into serious consideration the political interests of the other parties when it designates the date of the upcoming election. I want to refer to the fact though, that the designation of the date of the election – of course – has to be the result of further consultation with the other parties. In this situation in which there is the danger that the Government becomes unable to govern, the Parliament loses its legitimacy, a governing party cannot do anything else but consider seriously the rescheduling of the election to an earlier date.

I would argue that these issues have to be addressed because the questions that were brought up by Comrade Károly Grósz should be answered within the context of an election of parliamentary members that is rescheduled to an earlier date. Comrade Grósz touched upon questions such as the summoning up of a nationwide session of the party, the function and the date of this possible party session and – as it was recommended by many party organizations – the idea of a party congress that is rescheduled to an earlier date. Without intending to sketch the function and the possible goal of this party congress I would like to argue that a serious party that is well aware of its own interests is not thinking right before the election of a congress that would express the lack of self-confidence and powerlessness and aim at analyzing its own failure and responsibility and at performing a general cleaning as far as personal matters are concerned. There is no precedent for the organization of a party congress like that. I assume that the party would lose a two digit percentage of votes in the election if it presented itself couple of months before the election as a disorganized party.

However I would not intend to argue that the Central Committee should resist a mass demand within the party to organize a party congress described above. What I want to argue for is that it is of invaluable importance to come to terms with questions such as what kind of party congress we should organize, what should be its political content and what should be its inner balances. If we cannot create a better atmosphere than the one that can be sensed in this territorial party session, then it is hazardous to organize it. Presently we cannot afford a triumphal march that parties usually hold right before the election. Couple of months prior to the election we should not hold a nationwide party congress unless we can reorganize the party's unity to a certain degree and formulate, and agree upon a program that is intelligible and well articulated for the public.

The organization of a nationwide party congress makes sense only if the party can purify itself in the course of these party sessions – and I see it as unavoidable – strengthen and present itself to the voters with a regained self-confidence. That is what I wanted to speak about the wider context.

In the following I would like to turn to some more relevant issues of the party-law. I want to mention it in advance that I would like to ask the Central Committee to consider the experiences of the today's discussion and that of the discussions of the executive committees of the party in the counties and accept this bill as a background for the further work and give us a permission to continue the discussions with the parties involved.

What are the questions I would briefly want to comment on? One of them is the question related to the size of the membership necessary to establish a party. The present

bill prescribes that there is a need for 1000 members to establish a party. I would suggest that we show the greatest flexibility in this question. The size of the membership is not a question of the greatest importance either from the perspective of the registration of the party or from the perspective of the management of the party. It is well known that the association law prescribes that an association can be established if it has at least 10 members. Therefore, this size or a greater than this size of membership should be considered to be the criterion for registering a party. Although it is not of primary importance whether this size should be defined as three hundred and fifty, or five hundred or one thousand. The second clause of the second article, that is, the definition of what programs and activities the parties may have is more important for us. This issue is of primary importance. The present bill states that the programs and activities of the parties cannot aim at the violent seizure of power or such monopolization of power that would lead to the dissolution of the other parties. Moreover, these programs and activities of the parties have to comply with the Constitution or the constitutional laws and cannot encourage any non-compliance with them.

I agree with those party executive committees of the counties that argue that the first two propositions are constitutional basic principles, therefore they do not necessarily have to be included in the party-law. However, since the issue is of elementary importance, I would suggest that it be included in the party-law. At the same time we do not find it necessary to include in the party-law that the activities of the parties cannot aim at demolishing the social and state order. This activity would be equal with committing a crime and the union law clearly articulates that no union, therefore no party can commit crime. That is why it is unnecessary to emphasize it.

It is a complicated and complex matter to regulate the assets and financial management of the parties. I have to say that the international practice is quite widespread according to the parties cannot accept financial support from foreign organizations, especially from governmental organizations. That is, they cannot accept financial support from other states. It has a very rational explanation: it is one of the elementary conditions of the parties' sovereignty (independent, sovereign management) that both during the election and outside of it the parties cannot be influenced by foreign powers. At the same time we should consider whether the bill should include the overall prohibition of the financial support of the parties from foreign sources. It would make sense since every single exception to the prohibition would enhance the possibility to evade the prohibition. It is well known that the financial supports of the governments are not dressed as financial aids to those governments; these transactions are performed following particular strategies: these financial supports can be 'purified' through foundations or scholarships. Therefore, even if we consider that every prohibition can be outwitted in one way or another, an overall prohibition would not provide small gates, but better conditions for control.

However, today it seems irrational that international organizations could not contribute in a controllable way to the establishment of the basic infrastructural conditions of the political parties and organizations. I would suggest that this question be further discussed.

Within the general prohibition concerning the financial support coming from foreign governments and state offices the opportunity should be maintained that foreign organizations could provide financial support. Of course, these donations have to become public.

It is a general practice worldwide that the parties in a normative manner and in connection with the results they achieved on the election are provided financial support from the budget. The question emerges here as well: would not a financial support coming

from the budget jeopardize the sovereignty of the parties? Or what is the basis of the financial support coming from the budget? It is based on the fact that the parliaments recognize the parties as important mediators and representatives of social interests. That is why parliaments support the parties and they establish a normative basis for this support. The bill can provide an opportunity to lay down the rules of this normativity. Of course this is also an issue that has to be discussed with the other parties.

Two questions related to the bill have to be mentioned here. The normative financial support of the parties will be a relevant issue only after the election. At the same time the related governmental organizations have to provide a basic financial source for the parties before the election, without which the parties could not participate in the election. We thought that this issue should not be discussed in relation to the party-law, but should be discussed later in relation to the suffrage law that would regulate the next election.

Finally, I would like to make some comments in relation to the financial management of the parties. Various ways of handling this matter can be observed worldwide. There are stricter policies that more strong-handedly control the financial management of the parties and there are policies that are more liberal towards the financial management of the parties than towards other economical activities. In those countries in which the share of the financial support from the budget is smaller, in general, the regulation of the financial management of the parties is more liberal.

That is why we suggest that it be considered how – within profoundly determined conditions – could the financial support from the budget be reduced simultaneously with allowing the parties to have a more liberal financial management and providing them with more advantages.

The bill does not discuss the problematic of the financial situation, wealth of the parties, since this theme does not fit the bill's logic. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) gave voice to its position many times that it be discussed again in the session of the Central Committee that the establishment of the basic infrastructure of the founded, registered, thus legally recognized parties is necessary and the competent parliamentary and governmental organizations should provide financial support for this.

Simultaneously, the Political Committee finds it necessary that our own party's resources be assessed correctly and on a full scale. This is not going to be an easy task, since our party's financial management has always been quite generous. In certain periods the blurring of the party's and the state's transactions made it puzzling to figure out which financial resources served as a basis for increasing the party's resources. In spite of it, it is indispensable to face our own practices and to be able to prove to the wider society that from this perspective our party has nothing to hide. We have to clarify it within the party – and this investigation should not only happen within the central bodies of the government, but also within the territorial-local bodies of the party – that how we want to account for those leased properties and resources that were not sufficiently, appropriately registered. Here we also have to discuss – of course within the limits of rationality – whether the leased properties, other properties and facilities that belong to the party should be turned to the benefit of the society. I believe that we should not wait for a central decision as far as this matter is concerned. The territorial-local bodies of the party by taking into consideration the given conditions, local practices and political atmosphere can take measures that would strengthen their self-confidence.

In the bill the issue appears that the Constitutional Court would have control over the registration and the activities of the various parties. Besides other reasons that is why it would be necessary to lay down the party-law simultaneously with the establishment of the

Constitutional Court. At the same time, it is a problem that the Constitutional Court should follow the presently effective Constitution. The present fundamental laws do not provide sufficient guidelines about the management of the parties in accordance with the Constitution. The bill of the party-law tries to overbridge this basic problem by listing in the bill's clause – based on the basic principles accepted in the concept for the regulation of the Constitution – those principles that the parties have to take into consideration in articulating their constitutions, programs and developing their management. It is still under discussion whether this list that intends to extend to all possibilities is not exaggerated, whether it is necessary at all and whether it could not be narrowed down within the limits of rationality.

I would suggest that the Central Committee occupy a flexible position in this question. The Central Committee should support the narrowing down of the list in terms of rationality and give freedom to its own delegation that is participating in the negotiations.

In the end, I would like to touch upon two questions. The most significant, or rather, the most fervent debate was about two questions that were not related to the party-law. That is, the debate was about whether it is reasonable to deny the right for becoming a member of any political party to practitioners of certain professions and occupations such as judges, lawyers, employed soldiers or policemen. We can see various examples for this practice in other countries.

As certain examples I would mention that in Austria, the German Federal Republic, England and France there are no relevant restrictions as the party affiliation of practitioners of certain professions is concerned. The restrictions only extend to a narrow circle of issues.

There are countries in which the judges are permitted to have affiliations to political parties, whereas the judges of the Constitutional Court are prohibited to be members of any political party. In these countries similar restrictions are employed to the ones we intend to employ in case of the President of the Republic. That is, that the judges of the Constitutional Court cannot be members of the governing bodies of political parties. In other countries we can observe that there is an elaborate and sophisticated system of restrictions in this matter. For example, in Turkey it is prohibited to the teaching and studying bodies of universities to become members of political parties. In Europe there is no generally accepted practice in this matter. There are strict restrictions in Portugal and Italy, in which countries the restrictions are extended to the employees of the administration of justice and that of the military service.

In case of Hungary we have to consider the situation that has been historically shaped and still effective. I believe that changing a tradition that has been practiced for several decades and that would result in a negative discrimination of the members of the MSZMP does not seem to be reasonable. Therefore, we do not support the legal regulation of this matter. It would result in a quite unsolvable moral and political conflict if those employees, judges and military officers that have been members of the MSZMP for several decades had to face the pressure that they should resign either from their profession or from their party membership.

I believe that it would result in unforeseeable consequences if the MSZMP agreed to any kind of compromise in this issue as a response to the outside pressure. I would add: the debate concerning this issue is fervent, however the real problem is not this. The emphasis is on another question that rather seems to be practical in nature than theoretical, although it has a theoretical aspect as well. This question can be formulated as follows: can the laws define the organizational principles according to given parties are organized or it is exclusively an internal affair of the parties, or it is necessary to build in certain

restrictions somewhere else. For example, should any restrictions apply to the establishment of the organizational principles of the armed forces, the jurisdiction. That is, should any restrictions be built into the laws regulating the activities of the courts or public prosecutors' offices.

Our standpoint is that the party-law should not prohibit any organizational activities within the workplaces either in general or in terms of particular situations. This kind of restrictions should not apply to either the armed forces, or police, or public prosecutors' offices or courts. It would also mean that if there is no such prohibition like this, then equal rights can be provided to each single member or employee within the organizations and the workplaces. The MSZMP does not want to suffer any negative discrimination, it does not want to enjoy any positive discrimination either.

Based on the principle of equal rights each party should decide by itself how and where it wants to organize itself. Why have we come into this conclusion? Primarily because we hold that the premise that we quote frequently stands for this question as well: the essence of the things is equivalent with their histories. The history of the MSZMP was primarily based on the principle and practice of the organizations within the workplaces. That is why it would be quite a disadvantage for us to have to retreat from the workplaces suddenly, without any transition and in case that the conditions are not provided. This move would lead to serious internal conflicts within the party.

That is why we have come to the conclusion – and it is an opinion that many of us share, although there is a sensible disagreement as this issue is concerned within the party as well – that it would not be the multiple presence of the various parties within the armed forces and organizations that would destabilize those forces within a short period of time. Even if the appropriate conditions were provided it would result in a conflict if our party was commanded to retreat from the armed forces. I would suggest that the Central Committee consider that the focus of the political work should be continually and gradually relocated onto the residential areas. There is no comprehensive decision that would solve this problem from one moment to the other or it would result in such political anxieties and traumas that should rather be avoided in the present internal political situation.

That is why we suggest that in case of the armed forces and organizations the focus of the political activities should be removed from the workplaces and placed on the residential areas and this relocation of the focus should parallel the coordination of the office of party politics. The Hungarian Military Forces and the Ministry of Home Affairs should work out a larger scale project that would ground a system of conditions and would make feasible a transition like this simultaneously with it.

At the same time we should be aware that we can expect tough attacks in relation to this matter from the wider spectrum of the society and especially from our political opposition. Moreover, I could say that a part of the political opposition considers the MSZMP's politics in this matter to be crucial in having our party resign of the monopolization of the power.

What can be the reason for this? What are the rightful anxieties of the opposition? The opposition have the fear that in a given critical situation the MSZMP may use its majority and influence in the armed forces and police to reverse the course of the events and to dissolve the political pluralism. In this moment it does not make any sense to agonize about whether this anxiety has any realistic ground or not. These oppositional organizations firmly believe that the danger is inherent in the present situation. I believe that this problem will not be solved by the very response of not taking it seriously.

We have to make it clear that, like in other workplaces where the MSZMP is present, in the future the party will not intend to work its way up to the organizational and governmental structure of the armed forces and organizations. We also have to make it clear that the party-activities should be practised after working hours and where it is possible outside of the workplaces. The leading officers may be able to provide places for these activities. We have to make it obvious that the MSZMP does not claim to have any privileges in the administrative and financial management or in the practice of the so called authority.

Besides that, we have to make it clear that we find a more open and detailed legal regulation of the management of the armed forces and organizations indispensable. This project has to begin as soon as possible. The role, the function, the activities, the amount of time spent on these activities and the control of these matters by the Parliament have to be regulated much more profoundly and fully than it is presently.

We would suggest that it be put down in writing that the internal affairs and management of the armed forces and organizations be exclusively guided by the rules of military service, the order of command and the oath of police or military forces. We have to establish guarantees like the above mentioned one, and others as well, in order to soothe the passionate debates on this issue that we can anticipate and to work out solutions to this problem that are acceptable for both the society and the MSZMP.

Document 24.
Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
[György Fejti on the need for the Party to compete at the elections].
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 8, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
[György Fejti on the need for the Party to compete at the elections].
May 8, 1989
Verbatim Record (Excerpt).

Comrade György Fejti: Dear Comrades! We had a general debate about the internal affairs of the country and the present situation of the party. It was not useless, but it – by far – exceeded the themes of my proposal. Comrade Grósz and I agreed that may be the Secretary General should summarize the debate and I myself would only respond to questions that were directly related to my proposal.

If I understood it properly, the majority of the speakers – two of them laid down in writing their opinions concerning the party-law – accepted the bill of the party-law as a grounding for further discussions on it and for negotiations about it with our political opposition. Beyond that I would not want to get into details, we will deal with all of the comments and try to build them into the bill.

The other important conclusion we may get to is that there are many reasonable arguments that suggest that we start grounding and making preparations in legal and political terms for rescheduling the election to an earlier date. I would like to add that the legal grounding seems to be more simple since besides the party-law the bills concerning the Constitutional Court and the institution of the president of the republic are more or less complete. The only deficiency is that these bills have not been discussed yet in political terms, but this problem can be overbridged. In essence, the bill, the concept concerning the election is ready, there is some more work to do with it, but it can be submitted to the Central Committee within a month.

The political grounding of this question is more difficult. I believe that if we decide to reschedule the election to an earlier date and start introducing this idea to the Parliament, all subsequent steps have to be adjusted to this one. The following moves have to be adjusted in order that our party perform successfully in the election.

I entirely share P-I Vastagh's opinion: many people have not understood yet what is at stake here. People who work in the state administration, people who work in the media and perhaps many people who work in the top anagement of the party have not understood yet that an election that ends up becoming a soil slip will yield incalculable consequences. This election is not about that a disintegrated party enters the battlefield to regain its power, but what is at stake is rather that we must avoid a political vacuum that may lead to the political and economical collapse of the country. What is at stake is a matter of enormous importance, thus, we have to cultivate in ourselves a sense of danger and a spirit of competition simultaneously. Namely, in case of a landslide it will not matter any more who has been a reform socialist or a fundamentalist since when. In that case this question looses its relevance entirely.

Some speakers posed the question whether we should wish to have an election the results of which are arranged in advance based on formerly agreed upon deals, or an election that is based primarily on the competition of the parties. I believe that the internal political situation and political conditions are either not matured or absent to be able to hold an election that is based on a traditional competition of the parties. However, I find the argument vulnerable according to we should elaborate a construction for the election that is primarily based on a prior agreement of the parties. This construction could be developed without effort, but it would not offer solution to our basic problems and the legitimacy of an agreement like this could be challenged any time.

Therefore, I myself have come to the conclusion that although the risk is greater in case of an election that is primarily based on the competition of the parties, only after facing our own strength in a competition can we stabilize our party's unity in a longer run. That is, setting the results of the election prior to it is in opposition with our own interests, because it can be challenged, it can be questioned within weeks or months. I also have to add that the society itself would not even accept an arrangement like this. Moreover, it seems momentarily that the oppositional forces do not show any interest in a previous agreement like this. A similar agreement made the result of the Polish election vulnerable, that is, time surpassed it. We have to find a stable solution. In this context I myself find it intelligible as well to summon up a nationwide party congress that would have the function to prove that this party is capable to lead the country out of the present crisis. That is, this party has plans to do it. If – and I do not want to repeat myself – we are not able to do this, we will turn our project to a dead end.

What can we present in a party congress like this? We can tell that we have never started to face the past so deeply and profoundly than since May. Here I do not only mean that we will learn the lessons concerning the political and the economical situation, but also that we will start to investigate the case of the show trials. These trials stirred up a lot of emotions, facing them would provide an important space for the party to purify itself, therefore we have to come to terms with them. We can also present that we have already started to transform the [political] structure and even if not every element of this concept of the new socialism is clear yet, a number of important elements of it has already been articulated. Moreover, we have already started to reform the Constitution, the new form of which will be a grounding for a pluralist social structure, a modern state structure and an entirely new approach to the civil rights. Finally we can also tell that a peaceful, more or less balanced transition into a new political system is not feasible without the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. I believe that the significant groups of the society can be persuaded by these arguments.

Therefore, the party congress basically has to look forward to the future, we should draw a balance for after June and we should articulate a program for the election. I agree with Comrade Grűsz that it is unnecessary to designate a period longer than two months for the intensive election-campaign. If we want to hold the election in late fall, that is, in the beginning of November, then the date of the nationwide party congress should be appointed in relation to the beginning of November. In technical terms we could hardly arrange an election by the fall. It would not be feasible in legal terms either. I agree with those who argue that the 23rd of October can be a 'watershed date' in political terms and can lead to unexpectable events. However an election that is scheduled before the 23rd of October is not realistic, thus the election should be held after this date, that is, in the beginning of November.

The voting within the party is a valuable initiative or idea partly because it could free the party congress from issues concerning personal matters, although its content should be seriously discussed. I would suggest that we do not decide about it, but the Central Committee should discuss it sometime in the near future.

Document 25.

Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee

[Sándor Nagy's complaint that the National Council of Trade Unions
(SZOT) was left out of the national coordinating talks.]

Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).

May 8, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee
[Sándor Nagy's complaint that the National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT) was
left out of the national coordinating talks.]

May 8, 1989.

Verbatim Record (Excerpt).

Comrade Sándor Nagy: Dear Central Committee! I would like to make only a short comment. Originally I wanted to speak up, because I wanted to express my agreement with and support for the written proposal's two articles that I found the most important. I wanted to support the idea of the transformation of the system of the political institutions and that of the measures to be taken in order to prevent the country from an economic crisis. The other article concerns the circle of the participants.

My opinion has slightly changed, since after having read the two supplements I became uncertain about a possible different construction that would also be accepted by the MSZMP. The comments made by Comrade Fejti – though by highlighting the negotiations between the parties it suggested another construction –, Comrade Nyers's comments entirely and Comrade Szűrös's contribution partly reinforced my own uncertainty.

What is it about? It is about that I am firmly convinced that in the present situation of the country it is entirely inadequate to hold any kind of congress that does not deal with the basic social and economic problems of the present society. I believe that it is more than a sinful deed to make the population of this country, that is unfamiliar with the specific problems of institutional politics believe, that these are the key issues for the solution of our problems not only in a longer, but also in a shorter run. Therefore I want to make it clear that I myself do not support the concept of a congress that does not center on the social tensions, the down-to-earth, urgent problems of the country's economy that basically endanger our present and future. To talk about these problems is of essential importance and the matter of the circle of the participants is related to this issue.

I agree that there is a need for a real congress. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party cannot consider those organizations that have no more than couple of hundreds of members to be more important than the workers' unions belonging to the National Council of Trade Unions that have the greatest sized membership (despite the attempts the decrease this membership). I am convinced that in this period – right before the election – the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party needs the sympathy of the unions with great membership more than the latter needs the sympathy of the former. If the leadership of the party makes the mistake of not recognizing the importance of this issue, it may result in unfavorable consequences. The National Council of Trade Unions cannot avoid not to come to the conclusion that if it is not important for the Party to deal with such problems and include an organization with such great membership, then this organization should not consider it to be important either to sign agreements that were made outside of its control.

I believe, dear Comrades, that this question should be thoroughly discussed and I would respectfully suggest to the Central Committee that it accept only the original concept of the congress, and the further discussions focus on this, since the other plans evoke discontent from other sides and they may result in unacceptable consequences.

Comrade Fejti referred to that the Trade Unions, the Patriotic People's Front and the National Council of Hungarian Women should not be invited to this congress. In this society we have already used to the image that the satellite organizations are not supposed to have their own heads they could use for individual thinking, but they are supposed to

remain under the guidance of others. I would like to call your attention to the fact that this period is over. As the Trade Unions are concerned I am entirely sure, that my statement is true. Therefore, if you are planning to hold a congress in which the real forces that represent the entire spectrum of the society would participate, then the Trade Unions have to be among the participants just as the representatives of the Democratic League that does not have more than five thousand members. Therefore I respectfully suggest that the Central Committee make a decision that would not force the Trade Unions to get estranged officially as well from the negotiating position of the MSZMP. Thank you very much.

Document 26.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 16, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee

May 16, 1989

Verbatim Record of Minutes

[Subject:] **Political conciliatory negotiations**

(last quarter of the meeting)

György Fejti: I would like to give a brief report to the Political Committee on the reflections with respect to the initiative of the Central Committee regarding this political conciliatory forum, in addition to the information published in the press. Up to now, the New March Front responded. The whole response can be considered as a substantial contribution. It does include references to the past and some reticence, but fundamentally I see the willingness to co-operate and that we should and could do something together. We received a response from the Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Society. This is not a substantial contribution. It confirms that the Society received our initiative, and it basically informs us about the fact that the Society does not assume the position of the Opposition Roundtable. And up until yesterday – as I have not seen today's mail yet – we received a response from SZOT, DEMISZ and the Ferenc Münnich Society as well. All three are substantial responses, that is they deal extensively with the proposal of going into details, in a supportive way, but making it clear that the two-party negotiation method proposed by the Opposition Roundtable is unacceptable for all three organisations.

All of us present are aware that a very quick rejection using a rather unusual tone has arrived from the Opposition Roundtable, effectively on the day of making the statement public. This has caused displeasure even among members of the opposition, and has generated certain internal disputes. So, it became obvious that the organisations were not able to conduct a substantial debate on the initiative of the Central Committee. According to our investigations at the various organisations, despite the response of the Opposition Roundtable, the important organisations intend to deal with this question this week at a separate meeting of the opposition leaders. To my knowledge, the Hungarian Democratic Forum shall discuss the issue today, but the social democrats and the representatives of the people's party have also informed me about wishing to form their own positions, therefore I believe that those statements of opinion were correct which maintained that the Opposition Roundtable is one thing, and it is quite another thing that we asked independent and autonomous organisations to give their opinions, and a detailed and substantial response, if possible, to the proposal.

I would like to tell the members of the Political Committee that on Wednesday the three of us with comrade Nyers and comrade Pozsgay have sat down together at the office of comrade Grósz, and we reached the conclusion that it would perhaps be useful if the participants initiated direct contact with the important organisations. Comrade Pozsgay undertook to establish contact with the Hungarian Democratic Forum, comrade Nyers undertook to negotiate with the social democrats, and comrade Grósz has two meetings pending as well (*Károly Grósz: Friday afternoon*). I expect that, partly, these have already taken place, or will take place in the near future. It would be important to ask these organisations to develop their own independent positions. And after receiving these, we could start considering our next steps.

The reflections make it obvious to me that the position of the Opposition Roundtable still reflects the dominant influence of the Alliance of Free Democrats. This

also means that basically, in effect trying to weigh the possibility of reaching a substantial result in case of a bilateral meeting, becomes doubtful. When I say a bilateral meeting, I mean the negotiations between the Opposition Roundtable and MSZMP lesz egy lista a rövidítésekről, nem?. As a matter of fact, the Alliance of Free Democrats has an absolutely negative position regarding the party law, just like regarding the Constitutional Court and the presidential system. Therefore, it is not just a matter of whether the technical preparatory phase can be completed, since this can be done if it becomes urgent, but it becomes doubtful whether any result can be achieved by a negotiation method dominated by the Alliance of Free Democrats. When the negotiating parties are already there. Therefore, after devoting a lot of time to this matter and gathering a lot of information I seriously suggest conducting substantial negotiations with the organisations with which we have well-balanced relations, or at least this was the case up until now, namely the socialist democrats, the People's Party and the Hungarian Democratic Forum, about the fact that it is only possible for us, together with them, to break this deadlock if they are able to think beyond the very negative position of the Alliance of Free Democrats.

I would like the Political Committee to have a clear understanding of this, that is all this is not due to some tactic on our part, that the Opposition Roundtable would need to be sliced up anyway, but we can clearly see today that if it continues its work with the same composition and along the same lines as before then reaching a compromise will be absolutely hopeless even after the beginning of substantial negotiations. The free democrats want to go public, to debate, want a forum for publicising their views. They don't want a compromise. My investigations have clearly, totally and unquestionably convinced me that this is the case unless a shift of power happens among the leaders of the free democrats. So those who set the tone today, this will possibly be confirmed by comrade Nyers as well, belong definitely to the militant section. I do not have extensive knowledge about their internal power structure. The more level-headed individuals we have negotiated with before, well, whether voluntarily or yielding to pressure, have definitely fallen into the background. Therefore, I would like to conclude by saying that the two-party meetings decided on should, if possible, be conducted until the end of this week, and it would be useful if these organisations realised the value of, well, acting as independent negotiating parties.

Károly Grósz: I will meet with the People's Party on Friday afternoon.

Rezső Nyers: With the People's Party on Friday afternoon. We will try maybe this week, if possible, I will request a date, and they will come, the social democrats. I don't know what's going on with the Smallholders.

Károly Grósz: I am expecting a message from them, because I am the go between... (*Rezső Nyers: Oh.*) through.... Yes, I am expecting a message. They said, I believe that they have a session today... no, tomorrow, they will convene the leaders on Wednesday, and they want to meet afterwards. Okay.

[...]

[Subject:] **The re-burial of Imre Nagy and his collaborators**

György Fejti: Third issue: a meeting with three members of the Committee for Historical Justice is coming up this week. The topic of this meeting is the 16th and the issue of

separate demonstrations linked to the 16th. Well, feelings towards this are changing everyday here. What I can say is that the position of the family and the Committee for Historical Justice is objective and fair. They are aware of the potential dangers of a possible separate program organised at a different place from the cemetery, and the university... As a matter of fact, the members of the Committee for Historical Justice have distanced themselves from the idea of a separate program as well, that is the separate program to be held in a different place away from the cemetery. At the same time this extreme group of the Alliance of Free Democrats, or the Circle of Democrats, this is a small marginal formation.

Rezső Nyers: This is the Republican?

György Fejti: The Republican Circle, yes. And a small fraction of the earlier group, three opposition organisations have started to make waves in order to win over all the democratic opposition to support such a separate event. So, until this is the business or the initiative of these three organisations, it is not really dangerous. In the event that it should spread, and become perhaps a leading issue with the Opposition Roundtable and the Federation of Hungarian Democrats [?], or more importantly, the historical parties should see an opportunity in this event for tactical manoeuvring, then this could become a time-bomb. Therefore, I will listen to what the Committee for Historical Justice has to say, and after consulting with them, I think it would be important to talk to each opposition organisation separately about the dangers it entails, the potential dangers in an international context as well as in a national context – and to prevent the formation of a coalition here. If a coalition should come into being in support of this, then it could become a very difficult political event to handle.

So, in addition to pointing this out at the political consultations, and as I see it, and I talked about this with the leaders of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, they do not wish to become involved, but are not unanimous... And it is to be feared that a temporary favourable environment may allow minority groups to come to the forefront, and a coalition will be organised again around this burial. This cannot be avoided by political consultations alone. It seems advisable to discuss with them the substance, aim, concept of the event in public administration organs, and to contain it or try to contain it strictly staying within the bounds of the act on right of assembly. Because as time goes by it becomes more and more difficult. So, I emphasise that until only these three organisations are involved, it is easy handle both politically and administratively. We should prevent the event becoming wider, sympathising with the events at the Hősök tere and in the Parliament to turn into a ...

Károly Grósz: Well, the government state administration is working on this, no more can be done directly in this matter. One question has been raised here while talking of the propaganda of this event, about whether the Party should make a statement before the Imre Nagy burial ceremony. I would not support it. I think that the government statement which calls for national reconciliation and whatever else is enough, because we have to separate the Imre Nagy case from the political rehabilitation aspect entirely from this, this is not the legal aspect. There is a passionate legal debate as well. The opinion of lawyers differs greatly in this respect, whether a law can be made at all, whether submitting a protest about the lawfulness is justified, because this is not such a straight forward matter. If we look further we might come across some interesting things. Maybe, it can be proven subsequently that Imre Nagy was a Hungarian citizen, and a lot of effort is expended to do

this, but the legitimacy of him acting as the prime minister becomes doubtful, and so on and so forth. So this is not a closed and evident matter. Testimonies are very contradictory.

Legally it would be more justified to hold a new trial, because so many new circumstances have been raised. To say just one example: the judge at the end of the hearing was different from the one who had started it. It is a strict rule in the Hungarian legal system that if the person of the judge, or even an assessor changes then the whole case must be retried. This was not respected, therefore legally a retrial would be necessary. However, a retrial would mean that everyone, who participated in public life at the time, or around that time, and could have played any role would need to be individually interrogated. So it would mean individual interrogations of lets say everyone from Béla Biszku to Jenő Fock and who knows who else. So, this case therefore is not closed, legally it is still. Such a ... Marosán, and a lot else. Now that Marosán letter needs to be found, the one he addressed to the Executive Committee, well whatever, these still need to be looked for. So, I say that we, as the Party should not take a public stand, we should wait. This has to be dealt with on a state channel.

Miklós Németh: It was very interesting that both of them [in the Polish negotiating party], Jaruzelski and Rakowski have said that they understood, but asked why we don't rehabilitate him politically. To them, he says it is absolutely obvious – from the Gomulka archives, or whatever – that Imre Nagy was the victim of a political assassination. This was said, unfortunately, word for word. Gomulka too...

Károly Grósz: Of course. No doubt. This is the precise way to put it. Victim of a political assassination. This is one thing. It is another thing what might be uncovered if we start to scratch the surface.

Rezső Nyers: What was Gomulka's role? How was he involved?

Miklós Németh: They didn't say anything more. I told them that we would be interested in these things. Interested. But it was surprising.

Károly Grósz: This is like the experience as Zhivkov was saying that when the fighting was taking place here, and the machine gun, they are in the meeting...

Rezső Nyers: Well, my position too is that his rehabilitation is politically justified. Different for the Party politics, right. It is a different matter, the re-establishment of his party membership is another... But it is politically justified and not necessarily legally. Although if legally as well, if such things happened like a different person beginning it and a different person completing it. I don't really know, Tunisz completed it, right?, or Vida?

Károly Grósz: He completed it, but it was started by ahmm Brahó or Rahó? He started it, he conducted it then, I don't remember anymore, I read the... and Vida...

Károly Grósz: Yes. No. They put the case aside for four months.

Rezső Nyers: Yes, then we are talking about the one in February.

Károly Grósz: The one in February. He put it aside for four months.

Rezső Nyers: Someone else started it in February, then came Vida, but Vida then completed it in June.

Károly Grósz: But he did not take the case from the start. This is the legal problem, that he did not launch the investigation from the start.

Rezső Nyers: But that is essentially a legal proceeding. (*Interjection: cannot be understood*) I also believe that now the political rehabilitation is more evident. Well, Imre Nagy is generally known to be the Hungarian Buharin. The Hungarian Buharin. Well, Buharin was rehabilitated politically. Then...

Mihály Jassó: To me the question is that – because we can be certain that we will have to deal with it – we [are making] a political judgement now before the legal settlement. We can be accused again of putting pressure on the legal system. So, maybe a previous legal settlement is a more attractive solution, but it is obvious, to me it's obvious that we cannot avoid the political and the party political settlement of this matter. It will be brought before us. Whether we want it or not.

Miklós Németh: They compared it to Katyn, that in this unfortunately... with the Russians..., as they put it, it is the same. Everyone knows who fired the shots in Katyn. The Russians know, we know as well, Jaruzelski said. But this...

Károly Grósz: The current Soviet leaders have a fair position in this Imre Nagy case. They said we should do as we deem fit, but they would not react. We cannot go further than this, well, what can we say. They said they would not react.

Rezső Nyers: This legal and political rehabilitation is so intertwined that they cannot be dealt with separately. Well, as we saw, the charge at the hearing, the charge: conspiring to subvert the political system. This charge is a political charge. If we acquit him of this legally then we acquit him politically. So, I do not think it would be a good idea in any way to separate the political and legal [concerns]. I believe the party political matter can be separated. That is a different matter.

Károly Grósz: Comrade Nyers, this is not so simple, because legally he could be sentenced to at least six years. What can the court do with a dead man? Sentence him to eight years now? This is completely illogical, a nightmare. Because, for example, the appointment of Maléter as the Minister of Defence was done altogether illegally, because according to the regulations at the time the Council of Ministers would have had to decide. Not the parliament, but the Council of Ministers. There was no Council of Ministers meeting. Second: the withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. The parliament would have been needed, there was no parliament, there was no meeting of the Council of Ministers. If the president of the Presidential Council were still alive, the late Dobi, even he could not assume the responsibility, because according to the papers of the time he didn't have [authority] either.

Rezső Nyers: This is a formal legal issue. This is why I say that we can pass judgement on him legally, but not politically. Politically we can't, because it is commonly known that the leadership at the time accepted the withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty Organisation with

the exception of György Lukács. Well except György Lukács and Zoltán Szántó – maybe not Lukács, except Zoltán Szántó.

Károly Grósz: Right, I do not support a public statement on the Imre Nagy case by the MSZMP before the closing of the proceedings.

Document 27.
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 24, 1989.



Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

May 24, 1989

(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

Imre Boross: ... Well, we have to face it that if in the next elections, if MSZMP were badly defeated, it would be bad for us. If their defeat would amount to less than 5 percent of the votes, that might tempt them to turn to arms ... *(Some words are unintelligible.)* Therefore it is in our interest to some extent that the reform wing within MSZMP should become stronger, and that this wing should receive the majority of the votes, not some fundamentalist, or God knows what. So we have an interest tied up with the reform wing, I have to say.

[...]

László Morvay: I feel The Opposition Roundtable may get into a terribly embarrassing situation after the [May] 29 meeting of the CC, when the reform wing will be commissioned to sit down and talk with us right away. I believe that the Opposition Roundtable has not yet formed a uniform position in the most important issues. Therefore I join the proposal made by FIDESZ and what has been said here, that four separate committees should be set up promptly, as soon as possible, with one member from each participating organization, which can work out the joint position and submit it to the plenum for approval. For time is really very pressing. I feel the government, together with the reform communist wing, will try to implement its own program, ignoring and excluding both the fundamentalists and the Opposition Roundtable – this is how and why these bills are being worked out one after the other.

We have prepared a proposal the essence of which is that four separate committees should be set up in order to discuss and work out the four major issues which we want to raise at the meeting of the Opposition Roundtable and at the one with the competent boards of MSZMP. For we do not yet have such a common position, not even in a single concrete question. We do not have any common position on the election act, the date of the general elections, neither on working out the conditions – financial as well as material – under which the political parties can function, and I could go on with a long list of crucial questions that we will have to face on the very first day when the Opposition Roundtable sits down with MSZMP. We do not have a concrete, elaborate joint position on these issues. This is why different people make different statements publicly on certain issues on behalf of the Opposition Roundtable.

We will not have problems like this when a common position can be formed in the special committees. These committees can start working promptly, even as early as this week, if all the participating organizations nominate one representative for each committee. There are lawyers here and economists too, not to mention the fact that the government has already worked out a short-term economic plan, a crisis plan, which has already been accepted by the National Council of Trade Unions. They will implement this plan. Because there is no force that could stand up against it. And this is the case of the other bills as well. The Parliament will pass them too. And then we can just run after our money. I propose that this should be the most important issue, this is where we have to make a decision, on setting up these four special committees.

[...]

Iván Pető: We have made a draft, which may, or should, of course be modified in several aspects, in several points. I want to present it. This does not include what György Szabad has said. That should definitely be included as a supplement. It has been made with knowledge of the statement András Tóth made yesterday. I now read it out. It is not written down in several copies, so I read it out. There is reference in it to the reform circles and the various statements. So then:

“The statement of the Opposition Roundtable. We welcome the plan for a platform made by the reform movement of MSZMP on May 20, 1989 in Szeged, considering it as a position which, if enforced within the party, will improve the chances of overcoming the crisis the country faces. We especially welcome the claim they made for starting prompt negotiations between representatives of the power holders and the Opposition Roundtable, taking it as support for the position we have always held. We trust that the initiation of the reform circles will have real consequences at the May 29 meeting of the MSZMP CC at the latest. The statement made by one expert of MSZMP, published in national dailies on May 23, 1989, appears to reformulate the position of his party, maybe as a result of learning about the opinion of the reform circles.

However, the fact that the ruling party allows the Opposition Roundtable to sit on one side of the table, with MSZMP on the other side, giving room at the same time to several other, not precisely defined organizations with a seemingly equal rank which ‘do not wish to sit on either side’, is nothing but an attempt to make the round table multiangular, the repeated rejection of bilateral negotiations, this time in an unofficial form. In order to be clear about it, we also indicate that the statement of the MSZMP’s expert – that the logistic talks have been suspended since the last meeting of the CC of his party because MSZMP has been waiting for the response of the various organizations to its so-called initiation – simply does not correspond to the facts. As it can be seen in the newspapers of May 12, the organizations participating in the Opposition Roundtable has responded to MSZMP’s statement by return of mail. So it is we now who are expecting a – this time official – reply from MSZMP which unilaterally suspended the talks started earlier. With the statement made by the reform circles we look forward to starting the talks as soon as possible with more hope and confidence. Signatures.”

So this part also includes what Tölgyessy mentioned yesterday – though not with full consent – and the logistic comments were accepted by everyone. So this is a draft. Period.

György Szabad: I believe this is a proposal with two diverging directions...

Viktor Orbán: Excuse me, what diverges from what?

Imre Kónya: Two diverging proposals.

Csaba Varga: I think we also have to add to our statement that what we are proposing now is that the Roundtable should sit down only with MSZMP, and in a short time. And this should be down at the highest possible party levels.

Viktor Orbán: Maybe I did not understand it properly, but I do not see any diverging proposals here. Both texts include the same things. The text, or draft prepared by SZDSZ

also says that we should negotiate with the party. I also think we have to consider all the questions in turn, and decide whether we want to negotiate with the government, the reform wing, or the main wing of MSZMP that is in power now, if this triple possibility exists at all. That is what we should decide, who to talk with. But I believe the proposal made by SZDSZ, they also say, if I understand well, that we have to talk with those who are right in the center of MSZMP now, who exercise real power now, and this is also what Csaba Varga said. Did I understand it right?

Csaba Varga: You did.

Viktor Orbán: But did we understand the text of SZDSZ well ...

Iván Pető: You did.



Document 28.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 26, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee
May 26, 1989

[Subject:] **Proposal on the rules for electing the President of the Republic, Members of Parliament and Council Members**

György Fejti: There are two classical solutions: the first past the post system based on electoral lists or on constituencies. The electoral list method calls for a developed political infrastructure, established political affiliations in the society, clear manifestos, because these ensure that people have a real choice. Well, the conditions for this don't exist in Hungary. This is what we should aim for, but, I think that this cannot be the basis for the next elections.

The electoral list method, undoubtedly, has the advantage of making co-operation during elections possible. Perhaps, even joint electoral lists would be possible. Earlier on, we have thought about the possibility of this. Today, we can say with great certainty that it is not possible. And there is another advantage to the electoral list method: it guarantees a seat in the parliament for exposed leaders of the party, by putting as leading candidates on the electoral list. Contrary to the constituency method, where everyone has to take the risk. Individual electors, oh, excuse me, another thing. The longer the list the more impersonal it is. So, it means that increasingly the basic emotions toward parties determine votes.

I would like to add here a few words about the results of an opinion poll: it was based on a sample of one thousand people and one of the questions asked people to name parties that they know of that operated in Hungary. The responses of the sample were rather diverse, they could name perhaps a maximum of two or three parties. So, people are not fully conscious yet of the existence of parties and of which parties these are. When responding to another question about which party they would vote for if elections were held within one month, all eight parties received votes, even those who were not mentioned by anyone as an existing party known to them. So the rejection reflex is a pressure to choose at the same time. Therefore, an exclusively electoral list system is not at all favourable for MSZMP.

Constituencies, undoubtedly, bring about a competition of individuals, personalities. And a competition of local programs. So, the focus of the debate is not really the general program of the party, but events on the local level. This is why I believe that this is the advantageous method for the MSZMP. Let me add that essentially the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Hungarian Democratic Forum propose a compensation constituency system as well. Precisely for the reasons that I referred to as well, that there are no definite manifestos, and the results would be unpredictable. Individual party candidates should run in individual constituencies.

But this would be more appropriate for fractional votes not to be lost. So the basic solution, which could bring about the widest consensus, should be a compensation constituency system where the fractional votes could be used for to fill the 40-50 seats reserved for this purpose. Now then, undoubtedly, the historical parties who had run in the elections in 1945 and 1947, and are remembered from then, will be in favour of lists, the exclusivity electoral lists. So presumably, there will be a lot of debate on this. I firmly propose to use the German model where half the seats are decided on by constituencies and the other half through county lists, this is what we should propose, this would change completely the constituency boundaries, would make individual constituencies too large as well, with around 60 thousand electors. And this would not be an organic transition from

the present state of affairs into the next. Then creating lists in big towns where the number of residents is higher than 60 thousand would be a better solution than the combined system.

So, having three variations would drive people mad, and I am sure that the members of the Political Committee weren't too enthusiastic about having to read it either. The man of the street cannot keep track, one version is difficult enough to understand. This is why we proposed the announcement of a well-prepared draft bill in stead of a draft thesis describing several variations. This can be accomplished with relatively little effort.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: In general I would like to say that I agree with accepting this as the basis and with discussing it at negotiations. With respect to our final position we should allow some flexibility during negotiations, allow an opportunity for the party leadership negotiate an agreement. So we shouldn't take a rigid stand in favour of a certain solution, but we should adapt to the opportunities that are presented.

So now I will go over this proposal described in document "F". Regarding the first point: I propose to have a drafted option for a spring election in addition to the autumn option. Furthermore I believe that it would be desirable to include another point that doesn't exist yet, about setting a different date for council elections than for parliamentary elections. It should either be before or after. I still believe that our earlier position was logical, that is, to hold the council elections as a kind of political preliminary round of the parliamentary elections. There are many advantages to this for democratic transition. It wouldn't be a disadvantage for the MSZMP, but it wouldn't serve the interests of the MSZMP's predecessor either, but would recharge the whole democratic process in a way, right? So I propose the inclusion of a second point along these lines.

From among the issues raised, the candidature of the members of military organisations caused the biggest problems in the Government and was debated. Finally, the Government voted on this matter as comrade Mórocz on behalf of comrade Ferenc Kárpáti insisted very much on his proposal, but he was left alone, the Government voted unanimously, except for him, not to allow members of military organisations to become candidates. Due to the fact that it would cause many conflicts in the parliamentary life, where the superior of the member of parliament would sit in the Government – right? – and that would cause political conflicts. This would show and would undermine discipline. And his parliamentary duties would certainly conflict frequently with the regulations of military service and military discipline. So from this aspect, it is not right to consider standing as a candidate to be a part of their citizenship rights in case of representative members of military bodies. It is a much more important consideration for military organisations to... this is valid for the army as well as the staff of the Ministry of Home Affairs, I am not so sure about the Worker's Militia. The case of the Worker's Militia is very unique, it doesn't fit into any of our regulations. But it applies to the others. And it is an important national interest to keep military bodies as national bodies without party affiliations.

Finally, the Government decided that, that it is possible, but this does not need statutory regulation, so respecting the provisions of the law, if the member of the military organisation gets placed on the unattached list as soon as he stands as a candidate. So, then he would exercise his citizen's rights, but his being a member of parliament would not be mixed with being a member of a military organisation. Comrade Vastagh has suggested for them to be able to run as candidates at council elections, I have to say that this was not

debated by the Government, but I have to admit the arguments in this case not validated, are not valid, I can fully imagine that there, there such questions do not come into play, and his own commander does not sit in the council, right?, in the Government. So I think this can be considered.

Well, I propose to leave out the revocation right, and I support it. I think that this is a fake democratic system, democracy is a mechanism, this does not fit into the mechanism, it is a part of the mechanism, an inalienable part that it assigns a responsibility on the member of parliament for a definite period of time and he/she needs to exercise this responsibility freely. Their freedom must not be restricted by threats, it would be very, very damaging, we see this now, now not because it is now used against us, but this means must not be used by us either. So I categorically oppose it.

The... I agree with the proposal of comrade Vastagh about allowing the appointment of supervising representatives of the parties. So, foreign supervision should not be allowed, a supervisory body is another matter, allowing foreigners into all places, is not international supervision. So, we cannot accept international supervision, but supervision by the parties should be made possible. The... this certificate system for absentees. Right now I cannot determine my final position in this matter, about how many votes it would affect, and what, but... but to be careful I propose as well to give consideration to comrade Vastagh's worries, if it is not too important then we should rather let go of this thing reminiscent of the "blue tag" past. I agree with comrade Vastagh's concerns regarding the collection of supporting signatures as well. Thank you very much.

[...]

Imre Nagy: Honourable members of the Political Committee! I think it was a very good proposition. I would like to add a few things to the draft statement. I agree with the contribution of comrades Nyers and Berecz to the debate, and I suggest for the first article that we declare in the statement of the Political Committee our determination for multilateral party negotiations.

I raised the issue of negotiating with the Opposition Roundtable because I am convinced that preparations for the election should be accelerated. None the less, failing to strike an agreement with a significant part of the opposition it is impossible to carry out. So, I also raise the possibility that perhaps in this issue we should give up our earlier position that called for a wide-scale national Roundtable, because the cause of the elections first and foremost demands the bilateral agreement between the different parties. Consequently, I find it a plausible solution in this question to accept the suggestion for bilateral negotiations, as the parties are there to make an agreement with. If we are ready to negotiate, my opinion is also to leave open some questions, and all versions should be debated, even in the form of today's proposition.

What is at stake at the elections in my view, is whether it is possible to form a parliament with a steady, functional government majority. This is evident but I haste to emphasise it because I imagine the performance of MSZMP during the elections acceding to this. I only mention this because as a consequence I hold the individual constituency system and any of its combinations seriously problematic. I must add that the clean first past the post system is out of the question for me in the present state of affairs. That would be the other extreme. It is obvious that in the individual constituency system, however it is amended, we can be stronger. Simply because non of the other parties have a built-up network and solid basis. They are unable to present personalities in all those places.

Nevertheless, I am afraid that should such a system be initiated, there will be hosts of independent candidates, who will immediately use the slogan: Mr. X is the communists' candidate, Mr. Y is the opposition's candidate, but I am independent, the voters' candidate, representing exclusively my voters, instead of a party or any other interest. That's what the climate of public opinion suggests. With 300 independent candidates the parliament is dysfunctional, for want of a government majority. None the less, should MSZMP candidates, I mean dedicated MSZMP candidates, win the elections, they would be just as confused as they are today: are they representing their party or their constituency? And if they are not recallable, which ensures that they can be kept at bay, the dichotomy will persist, causing them a serious moral dilemma. I am afraid, even if we win the elections, with perhaps a seemingly overwhelming majority, in actual fact the government will not be able to rely on a steady parliament. In that case our victory is all in vain!

I understand those counter-arguments that reason against such a double-mandate hybrid system. These are viable reasons. Nonetheless, I believe that this very system is the best option for doing away with the aforementioned dilemma. Namely resolving the problem that everybody wants to represent a wide variety of interests. All the same, my opinion is that we should keep all three versions on the agenda in the course of negotiations.

From this point of view the standpoint of opposition organisations is quite important, we have to come to terms with them, only we have to see that the majority of them is not considering how a steady and functioning government will stand up after the elections, one that is able to rescue the country out of the present crisis. They cannot think big, on a national scale, but they are rather heeding to their own personal interests, and their opinion is strongly derivative. Obviously the historical parties count on the fact that a bit of nostalgia buys them a few votes on the electoral list, because otherwise they are unable to come up with personalities. SZDSZ and MDF, on the other hand, rely on the fact that they are able to present a few personalities, so for them the constituency system is much better.

I am also for separating the three elections in time – i.e. parliamentary elections, council by-elections, and voting for the president of the republic. Even though I understand the obvious reasoning that both the council system, that is the local governments, and the parliament are in need of renewal. Members of parliament and council members feel the same need for competition. However, I think that during this far-reaching process of reshuffle that is going on in Hungary at the moment rendering the two pillars of public administration, namely the government and local administration, unstable at the same time and exposing them to a competitive event is too much of a risk. It is better to have at least half a year between the two. About the upper house of the parliament there has been no debate yet. I don't know (*Károly Grósz: We'll get back to that later.*) if there will be any; if so, I will give my opinion then.

Fejti György: I think that things can be eased up a bit. That is if we can agree that such an advanced election is more favourable for the country that we must reason for it. Nevertheless, the possibility of reasoning for another version during the negotiations should not be excluded either. In the meantime we have to make a decision. So, now we don't have to exclude the possibility that the date will be negotiated. To the best of our knowledge it seems that this year is more favourable. Let's also hear the reasoning of the other party, though. Let's hope that the majority of those organisations will accept our rationale.

I would like to stress once again the documented fact that three organisations voted

for advanced [...] elections. (*Interruption not understandable.*) It will be difficult, yes, we can talk about it, gentlemen, tell me what has changed, what is on your mind. It will be difficult to set the date but I also think that in the course of negotiations we should not refrain from any topic, saying that it is not negotiable, the date of elections among them. Let us try to reason with them.

Kulesár Kálmán: Once again let me call your attention to the fact that every negotiation is a bargain. So, if we say that there are two possibilities: elections in November or elections in December, and the fight goes on, or we are ready to accept the elections in spring, which means that we must stop (*Rezső Nyers: That's it.*) our manoeuvres against (*Rezső Nyers: That's it.*) the parliament and the government. (*Rezső Nyers: To let the legislation work.*) And then, then it will be alright if they accept it. All the same, it has to be accepted, fixed and observed. We have such an argument in our hands, because rational arguments cannot be brought up against such rationale. We say, if you don't accept it we cannot continue, and elections are at the end of November; full stop. (*Rezső Nyers: And then it is theirs.*) It has to be announced publicly, of course mentioning the alternatives that they rejected. I don't think that our negotiating position is that bad after all.

Of course there are always a few surprises in waiting. Especially if one or two organisations could be distanced from this conglomeration. I suspect that one or two organisations are in fact terrorising the rest. Free Democrats and FIDESZ are the radical ones, their emphasis is overwhelming and the others seem to be afraid of acting against them. It is a most complicated situation, to be sure, but we must not spare our energies to somehow loosen up this rigid Opposition Roundtable, which is perhaps not that rigid after all.

[...]

[Subject:] **Suggestion for public announcements on the occasion of the burial of Imre Nagy. Suggestions by the Social Policy Department of the Central Committee, and by the Institute of Party History.**

János Berecz: Honourable members of the Political Committee! Hightened interest and suggestions from inside the party on the one hand – bearing in mind the gathering of reform circles in Szeged – and our exchange of ideas with leading representatives of the party press – on two occasions so far – on the other hand lead to a conclusion that the Central Committee should come forward with a statement. Silence in this case seems worse than giving a not entirely satisfactory explanation. That would be my second remark: the issue cannot be closed terminally with the statement of the Central Committee. Firstly the inspection and assessment are in transition, secondly the burial ceremony is in preparation, which is not without sentimental residuals, what is more, sentiments are sometimes more effective than facts and reason. My third remark: there are two different drafts that the comrades have to consider; however, the shorter one is the same as the longer one, save for a synopsis, a summary. It is not entirely self-evident but the expert comrades think that a synopsis would be advisable after all, and they suggest the longer version. This was my introduction.

Károly Grósz: Thank you very much. Comrades, who wants to make a remark? There you go.

Miklós Németh: I agree I find it necessary that the Central Committee give their opinion in a statement. [...] From a political point of view I find it quite slim what is included in this statement. Not necessarily a more settled opinion is needed from the party but perhaps a shorter, terse but distinctive statement would be helpful. As to its political assessment, I think that this issue will be the focal point and a prime target of debate in home policy between 16 June and 23 October. It is not for the advantage, considering the latent danger of public climate before such a mass-scale event as the burial.

So far there have been roughly, or rather exactly twelve charter flights registered, and they are all fully booked. This alone means three and a half thousand people from abroad. Only from Canada and the United States. We got news that special trains have been booked and prepared to bring people from other cities all over the country: many are coming from Kaposvár, Kecskemét, Békéscsaba, from other places like Győr. Whole compartments and trains are booked. Things have changed; so far we thought that a mass of 50-100 thousand people could gather for the occasion, now it is more likely that 300-500 thousand will come. Taken that as a premise, we must talk about it in the assessment, what we could do. That is my suggestion, and the statement should be drafted accordingly.

Another thing... one of these days, two days ago I received a letter from two representatives of the ... Committee for [Historical] Justice, Miklós Vásárhelyi and András B. Hegedűs. They are officially asking for those things that we had received information about earlier on from various reports. They are asking for a disciplined, peaceful burial. In order to preserve the ambience of the event but taking into consideration the mass of people attending the service, they suggest and request that instead of the cemetery of Rákoskeresztúr the catafalque and the coffins be on Hősök tere. The family agrees with them now and they want the catafalque to be on Hősök tere from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., leaving enough time for the public to pay the tribute of respect, then at 12.30 a burial ceremony would start and last for one and a half hours. Afterwards, the coffins will be taken on a secured route, followed by the procession of relatives, representatives of certain – not specified – social organisations, and foreign guests, to lot 301 in the cemetery, where the burial proper takes place according to both secular and religious rites.

There would be four speeches: by Vásárhelyi, Király, Mécs and Sándor Rácz, and they would make an announcement, asking the people not to go to the cemetery with the procession because of the limited space around the lot, and because they consider it as an intimate family event where only relatives and a few chosen guests would participate. They are asking for securing the route of procession. First and foremost they want a permit to use the Hősök tere for the event, then they are asking for securing the route at the given time between Hősök tere and the cemetery, and thirdly they are asking for amplifiers and loudspeakers on Hősök tere and in the cemetery. Fourthly, they ask for roughly sixty coaches for transporting the selected guest to the cemetery for the burial ceremony. Those who are entitled to take part would be given some kind of a badge or certificate. As I have said, they would announce that the procession is divided at a certain point, that the ceremony proper is in a narrow circle, a family event, paying tribute, and... so they want only the invited guests to go there.

They have another request: it would facilitate the peaceful organisation of the event if a few hundred troops of the people's army helped forming a line – unarmed, without their barrettes, and with a black armband. At the Cabinet meeting we discussed using the soldiers for such a purpose, and agreed that the government distances itself from the problem. As to amplifiers and loudspeakers, we have to find a different solution, but seemingly it is all sorted. Nevertheless, soldiers cannot take part in this, there is no point.

(Rezső Nyers: Police corps will help though) (Károly Grósz: Then it will be trouble again.) (Rezső Nyers: There will be too many people.)

[...]

György Fejti: I would like to add a few words, not to the text, though – it needs further work, I believe so – but to the situation. The family and the Historical Justice Committee have changed their attitude, which they explain with technical reasons. The technical reason is that the cemetery is too small, so the danger of commotion in the crowd is impending, something that everybody would like to avoid: the family, the relatives and the responsible state organisations alike, I suppose. However, resolving this technical problem within the cemetery is not impossible. The catafalque could be there from the 15th of June on, and people could pay their tribute for two days. Other solutions are also close at hand to distribute the burial ceremony in time.

In my experience political pressure is exerted on the Historical Justice Committee and the families. I must tell you that family members and most representatives of the Historical Justice Committee are aware of the risk and danger involved, they are worrying in a major way, but eventually they came to a conclusion that it is in their interest to change their point of view. Why is it a radical change? First and foremost because until the ceremony is confined to the burial site it is – though publicly observed – a rite of tribute and a family event. If the ceremony is brought outside the cemetery, though, into the public space, especially to Hősök tere, it is not a family event any more, but it becomes an occasion of mixed sort, more or less semi official, so to speak, and this, namely that it becomes a semi official event, impels immediate consideration – we have talked about it earlier – of possible governmental presence and the context of the government's participation.

Consequently the investigation that the department of justice initiated has to get certain results, so it cannot be left entirely open. Now, there are negotiations about these things in different places, locations and at different levels. Partly political and partly technical negotiations. I think that the seriousness and importance of the affair calls for state management, and the rank of negotiating partners should be raised accordingly. I don't think it is a feasible solution that the vice commander of the Ministry of Justice and, say, a colonel of the Ministry of Home Affairs talk about this issue, because they cannot make agreements that ensure the organisation of such an event without atrocities.

Can we distance ourselves from such a ceremony to be held at Hősök tere? Now it is pretty difficult because it has been announced, and so on, but there is still the possibility of not giving consent for plausible reasons. I personally would not suggest it, though, because even if the ceremony will be held in the cemetery, the scale of the ensuing political event can be suspected. It cannot be discussed, however, only guessed that political organisations are preparing for a demonstration either on Hősök tere or elsewhere. Obviously that would be a demonstration against a negative behaviour, which is impossible or at least difficult to handle with administrative methods alone.

That is why I approached the issue as follows: since the family and the Historical Justice Committee are both seriously determined to seek co-operation and mutual guarantees, we had better reciprocate their co-operation and guarantees. Mutual guarantee means that it is made clear: apart from the Historical Justice Committee, who are those political organisations that line up behind such a tribute ceremony and give guarantees that it is in no one's interest to trade in peaceful reconciliation and turn the capital into the arena of unwanted events on 16 June. There are leaders of certain organisations who are

ready to appear on television or in the radio or elsewhere, and properly distance themselves from the possibility that unwanted events might happen in the streets of Budapest on 16 June.

Apart from the hosts of foreigners it is also important because it has been announced, too early in my opinion, that the Hungarian Television will broadcast a live coverage of the event. In such cases for instance I think it is unavoidable that the authorities are informed about the speeches in details and verbatim. I cannot conceive that speeches are broadcast live, without having checked. In many countries all around the world – I dare not say in all the countries – it must be adjusted what is said in a live broadcast on television, even if it is Béla Király or Sándor Rácz who gives the speech. There might be disagreement between us over the text but it can be rectified a compromise found. I see the possibility of compromise that is needed for a minimal content that live television coverage requires.

We should avoid getting into an awkward situation. Sooner or later we must decide whether we accept this semi-official character of the event, and if so, with what content. Because there are slight differences. Ours could be a quiescent participation or active participation. Activity has different levels even. If we want to avoid that the event is used as a quiet, dignified demonstration against the powers that be, perhaps we should think about something more than passive participation. I suggest that the Minister of the Interior, who is not only a statesman but a politician too, or someone in a similar position, should keep the event in control and make political agreements. Clear, obvious agreements.

I want to raise another issue, although it might sound a bit farfetched, that things could be treated globally for the time being. Namely that we are dealing not only with 16 June but with 23 October here. It is possible to talk about the 23rd now, exactly in the light of the 16th of June and their readiness to compromise, because we have to make an agreement with the very same organisations on 23 October. I see the predilection for both 16 June and 23 [October] to be organised in the name of peace and reconciliation – even though a considerable part of these organisations are obviously divided –, provided that we all have different views of what happened but we will not confront in the street. The basis is of course that the conception of that event needs to be amended and clarified – mistakes should be revealed. And the sooner... [mistakes] or sins, for that matter. The sooner we say it, the smaller the damage.

Károly Grósz: Comrade Szűrös.

Mátyás Szűrös: My opinion is as follows: I do not find these texts appropriate. Not only because it is meager but also because it is fraught with contradictions and its main argument is that research needs time, and so on. At the same breath, it slips into assessment. It also states that according to the opinion of MSZMP it is a mistake to sentence anyone to death for his political activity. There's more to it than that, of course. Then it says: Imre Nagy and his line is a precursor to the policy that the MSZMP would like to realise. Well, it is not entirely like that. Yes. So, I would rather avoid assessment. What is really needed is a declaration of political nature, and the Supreme Prosecutor should give a statement too about the legal protest, it is of course a government statement, or at least needed for the government's standpoint, it must be a starting point. All the same, we can say as much that it was a show trial, can't we? And that justice must be given. We consider it unfortunate. Something like that, even if ... if we cannot say it, this is the task of lawyers, to assess whether it was a show trial because that is the order of things. We might say, though, that we find it unfortunate, exactly on the basis of what is written in the

draft, that they were sentenced to death for their political views and activity. The needs thorough survey, though, it is impossible to rewrite here on the spot.

Another thing is that I can only support what comrade Fejti was saying, i.e. that the whole process needs to be thought over, I think, for the time being, it cannot be side-stepped. He is absolutely right, it creates an entirely new situation, because then we have to guarantee the security and all that. Then the government has to step in firmly. It must be considered whether the police should secure the procession route or some other corps, that provocation and unpleasant incidents is avoided. It is hard for me to see why the government refuses categorically the presence of army troops. Obviously it is still... I don't know what reasons the government has, because on such occasions it is usual to ... military tribute is quite conceivable, but this... I would not go into details, the main thing is that the government has to secure in such cases... and the question of participation would not come up otherwise. I do not go into details as comrade Fejti did.

A single exception is that the speeches should not be censored. Rather the other way round, we should do whatever is in the right of the government: not to broadcast live coverage. This is the way to do it, and the government has the right. Conversely, that we rewrite the speeches or ask them to transform them this way and that way, I think it is difficult to carry out. Preventing live coverage is not easy either but the government has the right. This is a funeral... (*György Fejti: Sorry, but that is what I thought.*) Is that what you had in mind? (*György Fejti: I did not say that it should be written here at the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, but agreeing on live coverage is impossible when [...] (not understandable)*) Then I am sorry. Yes, yes. Thank you very much.

Károly Grósz: Comrade Nyers.

Rezső Nyers: I also agree with the reasoning of comrade Fejti, and I believe that the semi-official nature of the event must be realised. Accordingly, the Ministry of Home Affairs should be a partner in the preparations from the beginning. It would be much worse if the rite of tribute in the cemetery and the demonstration on Hősök tere were separated. I think it would be the worst option, so I changed my opinion in the meantime, with the hindsight that the rite of tribute is less likely to turn into a political demonstration against the powers that be and against the regime.

As to military troops and the police are concerned, I'd say that the government should be trusted with this, since we cannot decide about it now. We were not... entirely against the presence of soldiers. Nevertheless, army leaders were strongly against the idea. That is why we should not compel the army to take part. This is a decision for the government to make. Somehow it can be done.

I agree with the opinion that the funeral should get television coverage, on one condition: they give guarantees that the speeches do not contain thoughts against the regime. I think that international obligations of the power, the regime or Hungary – or how to put it? – so that should not be in it either. They must be told what it is that... (*Interruption: nothing that hurts [the country's] international interests*) there should be nothing that hurts the international interests. What kind of a guarantee could they give? These days it is tasteless to scan speeches but all the same, we need guarantees. It is also a task for the government to... to get the guarantees and then we sort it out somehow. Perhaps at the end we'll ask for the speeches, but again, it can only be done informally. If they get to Miklós Vásárhelyi we can get hold of it. If not, then I don't know how we can get it.

As far as the foreigners are concerned, we also need guarantees that they will

behave themselves. One thing cropped up in the Advisory Board, or another forum, I don't remember as I took part in many different debates, namely that our embassy in Washington agitated foreigners to come to the funeral, and apparently the Pongrácz brothers too (*Károly Grósz: They were agitating from Budapest; official civil servants*) Civil servants? From here? (*Károly Grósz: Yes, from here.*) Whatever, the embassy relayed the message and took measures. (*Károly Grósz: That is true.*) Well, if it's true then it is not a feather on the cap for the whole government here... Not from government circles but many raised the question (*Interruption: Eager beavers.*) whether it is right to let the Pongrácz brothers come here, considering that they were shooting around with Maléter? [Shot] at Maléter or Maléter at them. Anyway, it is somewhat strange that they come here as – I have no idea what to call them now – national heroes, even though they used arms against the deceased. I am not that much familiar with that part of history, I know about the Corvin close and that's it. I always was a superficial politician and never cared for the Pongrácz brothers. However, if that's the truth about them it is a strange thing. I don't know if it is possible to keep them from coming. Maybe it's not a wise thing to prevent it, after all.

Károly Grósz: Of course it is difficult to draw the line (*Rezső Nyers: Yes*) – who do we let in and who is refused.

Rezső Nyers: Yes, yes, yes. Still it can be disregarded, not many things depend on it. I think the Central Committee should give a statement, if we can determine ourselves, it is an optimal case. I am glad because I never thought that we would make up our minds, but it is on behalf of the future, very much so. I also find it absolutely necessary that the government, that is the Central Committee at first, then a week later (*Interruption: a few days earlier*) – a few days before the 10th [of June] the government makes a statement of reconciliation, in that or slightly different spirit. I fully agree!

Having read the text, I think that the second, longer version is better. It can be and has to be further elaborated, comrade Szűrös is right in that sense. It should be submitted to the Central Committee, it doesn't work otherwise. I suggest that we amend a few things and then it is slightly better already. On the first page the first sentence of the third paragraph says "Imre Nagy and his line is the precursor to the policy that the MSZMP wants to carry out". Allow me to say but it connects the whole thing to one particular person. I would say that the 1953 reform initiative and within this the role of Imre Nagy, we can say that this was the precursor to ... this is correct.

Then on the first page, the last paragraph starts with the phrase "salute". Let's not salute but restrain ourselves because to an extent we are responsible too, the present generation, as the MSZMP..., let's not salute but start with the fact that Imre Nagy created something outstanding, and so we should march objectively instead. The following text is alright. On the second page it reads once again in the second sentence of the first paragraph: "the 20th congress of the SCP [Soviet Communist Party] justified him". Justification was given not to him but to the 1953 initiative, the reform initiative. None the less, Imre Nagy could get back to position with the outburst of the 1956 people's revolution. It sounds different this way. In the last but one sentence of the same paragraph it reads: "He miscalculated the international support for his policy". I would swap support for international consequences. (*Interruption: conditions and consequences*) Conditions, that's even better. Misjudging the conditions and consequences. He misjudged the support as well but that's not what we want to emphasise. True enough, it is not even a misjudgement, because he was promised support. Conditions have changed, though, other ideas came up in Moscow. On the second page in the last but one paragraph...

János Berecz: Allow me for a second, comrade Berecz. It says here: "According to the MSZMP it is a mistake to sentence anyone to death for his political activity". Now, if we write "sin" instead, then it is a verdict, isn't it.

Károly Grósz: It should say that it is unacceptable for the MSZMP.

János Berecz: Good.

Rezső Nyers: Unacceptable.

Károly Grósz: Yes, because we do not label it a "sin".

Rezső Nyers: Not a sin but...

Károly Grósz: Mistake is too vague.

János Berecz: Mistake is vague but if I say "sin" then it is a verdict on someone. However, the Central Committee cannot do that.

Rezső Nyers: No, I am usually against sin. We cancelled it in the case of János Kádár too.

János Berecz: Now it cropped up with comrade Szűrös that we should make it clear (*Szűrös: I never said sin*) No, no, but you said that mistake is vague. How to solve it then?

Rezső Nyers: In the middle of the text, in the last but one paragraph it says twice about lawyers, that thorough legal assessment... that it disturbs thorough legal assessment. No way, we should not refer to that. And then we must give enough time for the representatives of justice. It should be cancelled. Of course they need time to work but... not as much time as they want. Well, it comes down to nothing by the end. So, this part about the legal... Science must be given time, historical sciences, as there the political principle still persists.

I agree with the rest. This is a very good material that you made and with minor adjustments we should get it through the Central Committee, provided that they are willing to consent. And finally, what else is left... the funeral, yes, that... that the government participates actively. I think that the MSZMP... I don't know what to do, since on this ground even the MSZMP could be represented. However, I don't recommend it directly, rather in some indirect way. Naturally, if comrade Grósz wants to attend I have no objections because, because (*Károly Grósz: But you do not recommend it, Comrade Nyers.*) No, I don't recommend it but I have no objections either. I myself will not attend the service, because people already insinuate that I was member of the Central Committee at the time. I think it is the right thing to do and this... is what the party wants from me anyway. Whoever took part in the decision should not go there. Even though it was not that kind of a decision, only we gave way to the jury to make their verdict.

Now, looking for the possibility of a neutral presence of the government. Placing a wreath on the catafalque is out of the question... due to the accusations. Miklós Németh, on the other hand, can pay tribute with a wreath, and I strongly recommend it that he makes that gesture as prime minister. Exactly like this: Prime Minister Miklós Németh. We should not go any further than that, as in the government gives no speeches, perhaps

the wreath is unnecessary, only a delegation should take part, headed by Miklós Németh. This text explains why. All the same, I recommend the wreath. That's my opinion.

[...]

György Fejti: Secondly, many organisations will join the proposal of the Historical Justice Committee. This is already under way. Consequently these organisations will participate in the events. Not for the purpose of paying tribute (*Interruption: with 3.500 people*) and together with their arrangers. Having said that, the family – that letter was not written without a purpose – will ask the participation of the police, as they have the right to do so, together with the arrangers. The rationale is that the Ministry of Home Affairs can organise it decently. This is only the question of agreement. For instance, if policemen are there in plain clothes, wearing the same badge as the civic arrangers, it causes no trouble. None the less, Home Affairs should be trusted with it entirely: whether plain clothes, how many troops, etc...

Milós Németh: Jenő Földesi can provide an operative group. Of course if three to four thousand people gather, Budapest comes to a halt, from Friday 10 a.m. until the whole thing finishes. At least that's the ...

Ilona Tatai: According to the Free Europe, 16th of June is declared a national holiday, a day of mourning, national mourning. They reported it yesterday noon, saying that the catafalque will be on Hősök tere.

Károly Grósz: This is... of course, they are putting pressure on us. If our nerves won't hold, we give in.

Rezső Nyers: Did Free Europe announce it?

Ilona Tatai: Yes, they did: it is a bank holiday, an official national day of mourning. (*private conversations*)

Rezső Nyers: And bank holiday as well?

Károly Grósz: Yes. Well, they are exerting pressure, the whole thing points in this direction, of course. Now, it was not a thoughtful announcement that the funeral will be on Hősök tere; for state organisations that are part of the agreement it causes much trouble.

Rezső Nyers: Because if the family and this Historical Justice Committee say that they want it there, it is a different thing. But saying that the family, the Historical Justice Committee and state organisations agreed that Hősök tere will be the location!?

Miklós Németh: ... Such a thing. I only heard yesterday in Magyar Hírlap that...

Rezső Nyers: No, we simply acknowledged the request but did not make an agreement, that's what happened. Now it passed through a few hands. The Magyar Hírlap also made a mistake (*Károly Grósz: Yes, they caused a huge commotion*) but when the Magyar Hírlap came out foreign papers already knew about it... they were in the know. That's why they [Magyar Hírlap] published it...

[Subject:] **Political conciliatory negotiations**

Károly Grósz: Comrades, we should discuss this report or overview about the Opposition Roundtable, or rather our response to the statement of the Opposition Roundtable, and our attitude. Comrade Fejti, would you like to say something? No? (*György Fejti: no*) Okay. This is a report by the Ministry of the Interior, of course, literally. It is not signed either. (*Interjection: ...?*) (*amusement*) That's why we knew it, yes. (*János Lukács: Pál Vastagh is in illegality too*) Well, comrades, here is this statement, this has been issued today, this is what we have to respond to. (*Interjection: ...?*) Of course, of course. (*Szűrös: I have to go*) Okay, tell us your opinion.

Mátyás Szűrös: A few words, I would like to say the following: an idea has come up to involve the Parliament. So, I was approached by the Endre Bajcsi-Zsilinszky Society before the Opposition Roundtable talks, to get informed about what possibilities there are of involving the Parliament, what is desirable to convey toward the Roundtable, that is the Opposition Roundtable. An idea has developed there that perhaps it could be speeded up, somehow speeded up or at least the deadlock could be broken with the following solution of an MSZMP, Opposition Roundtable conference, or group, and involving as a third force from the People's Front, and the trade union, youth movement and Government and the Parliament such an impartial chairmanship... chairmanship would be formed which would mean something like this, that the rules of procedure would be under control, then a certain professional report... about the draft bills, if legal or other issues arise. This was not confirmed afterwards. This is one of the variations that would be useful to think about what we should do.

The other. I think comrade Kulcsár .. more.. comrade sent a letter in which he made a proposal with these aims, to break the current deadlock. The copy he sent me shows that he sent it to comrade Fejti, comrade Grósz, comrades Miklós Németh and Imre Pozsgay. The essence of it is that the Parliament could invite these negotiating parties to such a talk about these draft bills. So the Parliament's role would be linked to this. And since it came up several times to make the Parliament the venue, according to the who-ever-comes principle.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: I urgently propose [to make] bilateral [contact] with the historical parties and signal our willingness to have trilateral and quadrilateral negotiations. About everything, informally, and principally about the process of drawing up the new Constitution and the elections. And the correlation between the two.

This is the basic problem, that comrade Kulcsár mentioned, that either elections this year, then it is not so important, but the party law and the election law still need to be done. Or, if they want elections later, then they should do their best as well to ensure that the Parliament can continue working and legislating to the extent that this Parliament is able to reach the first stage of drawing up the Constitution, to reach the stage of the first reading of the new Constitution and the second reading to be heard by the new Parliament, the final version to be decided on by the new Parliament. I think that this is a constructive proposal on our part which cannot seriously be countered, just on the basis of prestige, but that is revealed sooner or later.

Now, the Parliament: I agree without qualms with having negotiations in the

Parliament. If they want to negotiate about the current laws, the transformation law and separately about the laws to be presented now, then I think that the Government should signal its willingness to negotiate. But then this is not a general political negotiation, but about these with the Government. In the first phase, I think it would be a mistake for the Speaker of the Parliament to undertake it, because if it doesn't lead to an agreement then the Speaker of the House gets into a very difficult situation, right?, because he can say nothing but that the Government is, the Parliament has to go. But then this, how shall I put it, this position of being above party politics is lost. However, I think that if we can see serious signs of reaching an agreement, then the Speaker of the House should become involved. So he should keep this... even if he is a party politician, he cannot change, free of it, and it wouldn't be good either, but even so he is a, a national figure. So now we shouldn't accept his involvement.

Mátyás Szűrös: That would be absolutely unacceptable for the Government or the Parliament to negotiate with parties. Only an impartial chairmanship could be undertaken.

Rezső Nyers: Yes, but (*Szűrös: what they propose*) yes, only the impartial chairmanship can get into trouble too, if there is no agreement. Then it can get into trouble. Especially at the beginning, if we clash. I don't know what they want with this transformation law. We have to stick by this, I think. And then there will be trouble. It has to be, the Government has to explain to them that the immediate start of an opening up to the West is at stake. Well, this is their philosophy and now they are bidding over each other because of some pseudo-radicalism and are stopping the whole thing. But this should be very quickly. Oh, I am afraid that time will run out. So, I don't know how much time we need with the historical parties to, well, one of them is done, right?, but (*Károly Grósz: the other is done too, that will be again next week*) Two are done? (*Károly Grósz: next week*) If this is quickly...

Szűrös: Comrade Grósz, I'm leaving, I will make contact with comrade Fejti. Excuse me. So that they don't finish before.

György Fejti: I don't really want to speak on this matter. Principally because I don't feel that I have been given adequate support, sometimes not even fundamental solidarity, to succeed in these matters more or less.

Now, my experience is that to begin such a war of statements, so now they published a statement then we publish another statement, is completely pointless and irritating. It irritates the party members and the public as well. And, actually, the tactic of the Opposition Roundtable is based on that the wider public, so the uninitiated public, only half listening to and watching events, will blame the MSZMP anyway, I admit. Well, partly because of the smooth misinforming declarations and demagoguery of the spokespersons of the Opposition Roundtable. And what we tried to respond to in our own way with varying talent and success. But naturally not so coarsely and not with the same arrogance, so as not to have to adopt the same style. As a result the overall picture is that here is this big, mammoth party, unable to act, enormous, sluggish, unable even to complete a series of technical negotiations.

Nonetheless, we should break the deadlock, I propose as well to try once more. And I say once, because afterwards it becomes physically inoperable. So it should be tried once more, to break the deadlock. But this involves harmonised actions, because it is not the first time that I found myself in a situation where the Hungarian Democratic Forum,

the Social Democratic Party and the People's Party go back on agreements made orally. And it is awkward to ask for everything in writing, it is, well, embarrassing since this whole thing should be based on trust, but we are almost at the stage that it is pointless to sit down to talk without witnesses.

The Opposition Roundtable is definitely dominated by the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), and their negotiation methods are clear from this paper. They want to make the news in the TV, disorganise the party, incite conflict between the leaders of the parties, the leaders of FIDESZ and the MSZMP, to pit the Parliament against the party, the party against the Government and to prove if possible that negotiation cannot begin due to the unwillingness of the ruling power to reach a compromise. But as soon as the negotiations will start it will become obvious that their co-op... willingness to agree is non-existent. So, they don't want a party law, they don't want a presidential system, they don't want a Constitutional Court. In fact they want a few things that are closely related to the elections, or their earlier obligations, so they are ready to negotiate about the elections. About the amendment of the Penal Code, redistribution of property and the press, access to the press. Well, these are their narrowly defined interests.

So we can easily get into a situation where the negotiations begin, but positions freeze immediately, just like with respect to the technicalities. Nonetheless, I propose to take initiative and propose a trilateral or quadrilateral negotiation. This would mean that one delegation will be sent by the MSZMP, another by the Opposition Roundtable and a third one by independent organisations. And an observer status could be ensured for those who wish to participate as observers. I think that the level of the negotiations should be higher, so it should be declared that the MSZMP is appointing its own negotiation delegation with the involvement of the competent government officials in order to launch the political negotiations. I don't think it is a possibility to have a separate delegation for the MSZMP and the Government, this would create a completely impossible situation, this is, by the way, one of the weaknesses of comrade Kulcsár's proposal. So a joint MSZMP and Government delegation would take part.

And it would be useful to determine the last date until which the avoidance of substantial negotiations is advisable. So, a slight pressure regarding until when we are interested in beginning this thing. I think that if we can't begin substantial negotiations until the first week of June, the end, the first two weeks of June, then the whole construction becomes pointless. And we will just get trapped, because if we pass the stage of technical negotiations, then there will be some kind of ceremonial overture, and I think this is unavoidable, because the organisations insist on it. And if there is obstruction after the ceremonious overture that we will be put into an impossible situation, as a party.

This is why, besides this experiment, that I outlined, another option should be seriously considered, this option is legally absolutely proper, with lower political value, and this is for the Government to publish all the "fundamental" laws, as it has partially done so, already, and guarantee that the comments of the organisations separately, if they wish, or of the Opposition Roundtable shall be presented to the Parliament. Legally this is a proper and doable solution.

These are the two options I see, this is what I propose. It is a matter of consideration whether comrade Grósz should be involved. There are arguments for and against it too, of course, since I'm here to assume the responsibility of failure, so this shouldn't be another thing to burden the General Secretary. It would certainly be useful if comrade Pozsgay, comrade Nyers would be involved in the delegation. So even a three or four member group could be appointed. And to continue preparations orally.

So, I don't think that we should respond to this statement. It would not be too useful, and the content is such anyway that makes a response very difficult. By the way, our people are in contact with Mr. Tölgyessy today, and two of our experts are negotiating with Sólyom. Just to explore the grounds. It is difficult to cope with the Free Democrats, because all they are interested in is publicity, this has to be seen clearly, they would sacrifice anything for publicity. Anything. And the other organisations, I talked about this with Bíró yesterday while having a bilateral meeting, complain that this is intolerable, an impossible situation, they feel like hostages. No-one dares to leave this thing, because then they would be stigmatised, that the great historical opportunity, which created the unity of the opposition, this is what it symbolises, to break this, this... this would be an unforgivable sin.

Breaking it is an obsession of mine. I tried to break it up because I can clearly see that it is impossible to agree upon this things with the Free Democrats. So, as much as possible the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the three historical parties should be convinced about seriously considering it. It is possible that when the substantial negotiations begin, this will become obvious. If the substantial negotiations begin and the Alliance of Free Democrats has a very rigid stand then maybe the other parties, three or four parties will distance themselves from them. But if not, then we will get trapped, we'll sit around for three weeks then we'll have to say, sorry, it doesn't work. That is very embarrassing too, especially if, as I say, the General Secretary is involved as well.

Károly Grósz: It is not embarrassing if we tried, but it doesn't work easily...

Rezső Nyers: I don't think it's embarrassing either, nothing embarrassing about it...

Károly Grósz: if we tried, and it doesn't work, that is not embarrassing, it is embarrassing if we don't try and it doesn't work.

Rezső Nyers: And then, then it becomes embarrassing if we don't agree in the Parliament and we can't carry the laws further. But if we can, there is nothing embarrassing about it. Nothing at all.

György Fejti: Then this is what should be done. Offer the trilateral, the quadrilateral.

Rezső Nyers: Trade unions should be on one side, and both of them. That is what I suggest. The National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT) as well, the other ... Liga, the one that is mentioned here, approached the Government separately and now we.. a relationship, wanted strictly economic, crisis management things, they came forward, they requested the negotiations, the team of Bruszt, and it began with talks between advisors. (*Tatai: We were told off for it too*) Here they are told off, yes. So those should be on the third side.

György Fejti: They are in the Opposition Roundtable, Bruszt and his team.

Rezső Nyers: Yes, but separately at the same time, they have left it.

György Fejti: Yes, but then they rejoined.

Rezső Nyers: Okay, but the relationship continued with the former...

György Fejti: In this trilateral construction...everyone who is important for us, fits in

Rezső Nyers: Yes, the fourth can be the People's Front and the young communists.

György Fejti: If they accept the trilateral format, then the same circle can be set up (*both talking at the same time*) with which we negotiated.

Rezső Nyers: They can say nothing against youth either.

György Fejti: Well, they can't, in their team there is...

Rezső Nyers: But if FIDESZ is included, what kind of talking is that... okay, yes, as the fourth side they can be there.

Imre Nagy: But they are not bothered if we are there, they only say that we should sit with the MSZMP. This is not such a big problem, for us, let's sit there, the trade union is the big question here, which cannot be told to sit with the MSZMP.

Rezső Nyers: The trade union cannot sit there, especially because...

Imre Nagy: because for us it's no problem, it can be done.

György Fejti: Triangle, with equal sides, I can already see the table.

Rezső Nyers: It can be a triangle. But, now, this would have to be tried headed by comrade Grósz. Well, comrade Fejti has made enough sacrifices. He shouldn't go under the guillotine voluntarily.

Károly Grósz: Yes. Well, I thought that it would go parallel. So, I would sit down with the three historical parties separately, where they want, so, independently from this. That is why I emphasised 'unofficial' and this anytime, anytime next week, even on one day one after the other, in order not to – to write it in the letter – that the intention is not to break up the Roundtable. Not that, because I feel there is distrust.

Now the distrust. The other side has different tactics. Propaganda is needed, and this is needed, and they need to prove themselves. But these three might have a different position, at least I see a different position. And meet not together with all three, but separately with these three. (*Rezső Nyers: Yes*) To do that, the General Secretary next week, once, unofficially. I wouldn't publish anything on it. The fact alone that we offer such a meeting and if we persuade them to consider it official or unofficial, is a response to this letter. A response, in the first instance.

Second, simultaneously, we should signal immediately on Monday that we are ready to ... about the three sides of a triangle... we are willing in this formation. And then we should try a third channel immediately, and bombard simultaneously, so at the same time with three proposals at the same time, that the Government is willing to consult with them about these plans, where the representatives of the parties would be invited by the Government, I don't know if comrade Nyers would undertake it, comrade Pozsgay would undertake it, about these topics. This should be launched on three channels at the same time. Launch it on Monday morning. (*Interjection: But there is only the party law among these*) Well, there is the party law, the election, - sorry? (*Miklós Németh: through the*

current channel, well, one month from now) but no, well, we are far from the election law yet. (Miklós Németh: the party law, the amendments to the Constitution etc. shall be put forward tomorrow or on Monday) alright, but we talked about undertaking to put the opinion formed over there beside every MP.

György Fejti: It is possible if there is a press conference, it can be said that there is a trilateral initiative... and appointed new MSZMP.

Károly Grósz: I say that, I don't know...

Miklós Németh: The General Secretary's .. is one thing, that is .. has one problem that if it is discovered, and it will be discovered, because they will read the letter, boast about it and the reflexes on their part will enter into force immediately, these, and we will face exactly what we want to avoid, we don't want to divide it. Because we avoid even the appearance of it.

Károly Grósz: That is exactly why we should phrase it so bluntly and harshly, with great naivety, as if we didn't know that it would reach everyone.

Miklós Németh: But, well, they don't do first motive or even second motive politics, so they would translate a blunt text immediately. Well, they decode.

Rezső Nyers: Okay, but this is not negotiation...

Károly Grósz: this is not a negotiation, this is a meeting (*Rezső Nyers: this is a meeting*) meeting, not public.

Miklós Németh: I understand, comrade Nyers, but it would be difficult to explain that this is just a meeting.

Rezső Nyers: yes, but they won't have arguments to attack it.

Károly Grósz: But if we write the letter well, I am thinking still about not saying anything for now. We get our proposals to them. We can wait with publicity one week after, or I don't know when, that we did this and that. The General Secretary's letter can then be published, then the invitation letter by the competent leader of the Government to invite them can be. It has to be published, that's all. And this is what they refused to come to. That's it. So now, now we need a different behaviour. It is obvious that we cannot continue along this path. So, now we should act like a steam-roller on all fronts at the same time. And we shouldn't try to gain a temporary propagandistic advantage, it will be advantageous for us in the future. (*Rezső Nyers: Could be*) We can take another week, I'm sure, there are enough...

Because comrade Fejti could take part in these three channels by holding the three angles together. Comrade Nyers, or with someone, I don't know if comrade Pozsgay would undertake the Governmental part (*Rezső Nyers: Pozsgay needs to*) Pozsgay would undertake the Governmental part, then he should discuss it with him alone throughout.. And I will write about an unofficial, consultative meeting to the three historical parties, in a normal letter I will offer the ahhm, about where...

Miklós Németh: Pozsgay is not at home yet.

Rezső Nyers: Until when?

Miklós Németh: He will be here on the 5th for the first time. He wrote me a letter detailing his program. So he is not there at CB or in the Parliament. So that week is out. And that is a lot.

Rezső Nyers: Okay, but we can't do anything.

[...]



Document 29.
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
May 31, 1989.



Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable
May 31, 1989
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

Viktor Orbán: I'm not convinced by the arguments, the truth is that ... with respect to timing I still say we should not ... We can feed them with promises, this much of machiavellism would not hurt, but we should not give them the chance that a communiqué is made public before the 16th which says that we have agreed on starting the negotiations ... [...] I believe the supposition you have built your arguments on, I mean it is not sure that it's true. I wouldn't say that mine is better or real, but I'm just not [sure] it is true. ... For I think what will press them to negotiate is not that some concrete, threatening date will come, and before it comes, they have to, because they fear that date or day. I believe it is not these concrete threats that press them to negotiate, but rather some more general fears. So what presses them to negotiate is that public feeling in the country is increasingly hostile towards them. That is, it is more and more obvious in public feelings that in the most critical issues the society holds an opposite view to that of MSZMP. This public feeling ... I believe this is the pressing factor, not the 16th, which is a possible date for turbulence. But in my view it is definitely this public feeling. And they're afraid ... the opposition is getting stronger not because it is doing a bloody good policy but rather because there are events taking place all the time in the society which make it evident that society is against them. From this logic, however it follows that after every such event we have a better chance than previously. [...]

Károly Vigh: Can I make a comment on this? Doubtless, the situation has improved since March 15, the position of the opposition, and this can be seen in the talks and in any other respect as well. Still, I would not compare March 15 with this upcoming June 16. Because there are several signs, there is information that they are worried about June 16 indeed. They are worried. Some circles in the ministry of the interior, the police, etc. They were not reassured at all by our endeavor to hold a memorial with utmost dignity. The semi-official, inquiring talks with people at the ministry of the interior, and what our friends and others who are in charge of organizing the June 16 events have heard in private conversations all convince us that yes, there is a lot of worry among them. They are worried indeed. We have heard such words from the Marxist circles, the reform circles, particularly from the Budapest reform circles that people in the White House are worried about it. So this is obviously true.

I agree that yes, we should start the negotiations in this direction. This does not yet mean an agreement. And this is the start of the negotiations. Nobody can say in the country that now then, the opposition is having underhand dealings with MSZMP by making concessions. We have started the negotiations but we have to take into consideration that the public opinion, the society does expect us to make some concessions, because you should just ask the ordinary people what they think about these roundtable talks, the behavior of the Roundtable; we should not think of ourselves that the society, the ordinary folk have such a high opinion, a clearly positive view about these talks. No. So I definitely propose that we should start, not on the 10th but on the 11th, and then we will go on after the 16th, we will go on.

[...]

Péter Tölgyessy: In my view it is not important when the first meeting should be held. But it has to be decided before the funeral. If we want an agreement then we will have to bring this matter to a decision more or less before the funeral. Then, whether the television and the radio should be present at this first big talk, or before or after it, well, this is not a terribly important issue. But making a decision before the 16th serves us good. Afterwards it may happen ... the consideration ... what you say, but I find it likely that they will breath a big sigh and might get tough.

Document 30.
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
June 9, 1989.



Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable
June 9, 1989
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

Péter Tölgyessy: We have to give a compensation for everything, therefore the text is extremely fragile. Here a little modification, and then they will claim their own in return. The text is perhaps seven pages long [together] with the signatures, but we worked on it from 5 to half past 11. They had a complete one ... Thus they did not compose it there. They signed a ready-made text. And well, there is another fact. It is almost certain that they know everything we are talking about here. Now it looks like they do, it looks very much like it. *(Only fragments of the interruption made by Zsolt Zétényi is intelligible ... what we talk about on the phone.)* Yes. I more and more think of this possibility. They were very very well-informed. Even on points in which I would have liked to put in some sentences. They knew everything very precisely, even the nuances. It was a lousy feeling. *(Csaba Óri: Otherwise, we have to change the site.)* Especially if there is something important, then I propose we'd rather talk right before it. If it is a very important issue. The news will not reach them. We have to talk right before it, if the matter is very important. It was very bad to talk with them like that. It was very bad to talk with them when ... *(György Szokolczai: Yes, you can feel that.)* You can feel that.

[...]

Péter Tölgyessy: Then I would now talk about the date. Their proposal for the schedule is this. Today László Sólyom and I will sign this text at 12. This is right, I believe. Then we will make it public. They don't want it to happen. If they don't, then in a separate communiqué ... we will not make the text public, we just inform the Hungarian News Agency that the document has been signed. The reason why this is so important is that at the moment there are only two parties, the third party will come in later. So, this has to be communicated to the public by all means that the signing parties are us and MSZMP. The third party will come in later. Our further proposal is the following: the document should be signed tomorrow, tomorrow is Saturday, yes, on Saturday at 15 hours at the party headquarters, followed by a press conference. And they would definitely insist on starting it. They proposed the 13th. The 13th is a Tuesday this month, which is not convenient for us because of the meeting with the American ambassador, as it turned out later. In the morning? Not? But if we don't start the negotiations, then ... *(Károly Vigh: Can't it be the 14th?)* Yes, it can. We can bring it up. But we did not remember the American ambassador. This is getting closer and closer to the funeral... But we have to see that they have warned us that if we don't start real negotiations then they will say to the public that we are just playing the time and we are not constructive. The document is signed, and there is no reason for disturbing real negotiations. So they will go for us.



Document 31.
Record of Conversation
between Erich Honecker and E. Shevardnadze in Berlin.
June 9, 1989.



**Record of the Talks between General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED
and Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR Comrade Erich Honecker, and
Member of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the CPSU and Minister for
Foreign Affairs the USSR, Eduard A. Shevardnadze,**

June 9, 1989

Eduard Shevardnadze. Our friends in the GDR need not worry. The Party will remain the leading force in society. It exercises control over all important processes, despite great difficulties. The most important decisions which the Politburo or the Central Committee has put before the Congress, meet with the consent of the Congress. The development of the situation at the Congress is being followed very attentively. In the first days ambitious and demagogic speeches received support. As the Congress proceeded, the ability of the deputies to differentiate between the truth lies and demagoguery has grown. A similar learning process is taking place among the people as well. In the beginning there were threats of strikes in case certain representatives would not be elected to the Supreme Soviet. The publishing of everything from Congress has proved to be correct. The CPSU must in the future adapt itself in its style of work to the new conditions.

Altogether one can be content with the results of the People's Congress. The Party has passed a difficult test. Henceforth the task is to solve urgent sociopolitical matters. Here the Soviet Union can learn much from the GDR. A compelling example of this was the most recent exhibition in Moscow on "Berlin Days," in which the mastery of social problems was vividly shown. Millions of Soviet citizens live in poverty. 20 million pensioners receive less than 70 rubles a month. In spite of great financial difficulties the Congress decided to raise the minimum pension to 80 rubles, for which the State must spend in all 4 to 5 billion rubles per year. This happens [despite] the awareness of the fact, that buying power has already considerably exceeded the supply of goods as it is. A further task of greater political importance is to increase the production of consumer goods. In addition it is necessary to solve the issue of housing. The GDR has correctly and in a timely manner focused on. A third difficulty is the extremely complicated national question. The assessment found earlier that the national question was forever solved was a big mistake. These problems existed long ago and have built up over the years. During the course of democratization they have been revealed. Special problems exist in the Transcaucuses, in the Baltic republics, and recently in Uzbekistan as well. One cannot be sure whether tomorrow will see new conflicts erupting in other regions. The Party requires a new nationality policy. In this respect, the CPSU is preparing itself for a corresponding plenary session. The writing of a new constitution is also a pressing matter.

"One knows that our friends in the GDR are well informed on the developments in the GDR, and are compassionate. Your valuable support would be highly appreciated in the Soviet Union."

Comrade Eduard Shevardnadze stated that Comrade Yakovlev will be received on Saturday by Comrade Czyrek at the request of Comrade Jaruzelski. to receive information on the domestic developments in Poland. At the moment it is still difficult to guess how the situation in Poland will continue to develop. The most recent events have serious consequences.² A profound analysis is necessary. It should be taken into account that

² In the 4 and 18. June 1989 elections to the *Sejm* in Poland, candidates from the opposition "Solidarity" achieved an overwhelming victory. In the *Senat* they won 99 of 100 seats, in the House of Representatives
Not for citation or publication without permission.

"Solidarity" represents a real force. The PUWP must accept a real defeat and finds itself in a very difficult position. In Hungary as well an unsettling development is taking place.

Comrade Erich Honecker emphasized that he shares fully the evaluation made of Poland. At a meeting with Comrade Jaruzelski, [Jaruzelski] still gave an optimistic evaluation of the expected election results, although the defeat was already becoming apparent.³

It is well known that Poland lies between the GDR and the USSR. Socialism cannot be lost in Poland.

In Hungary the processes are most probably unstoppable. Many Hungarian comrades fear that in connection with the planned reburial of the Prime Minister of 1956, Nagy, counterrevolution will break out again.⁴ What Pozsgay proclaimed has nothing at all to do with socialism.⁵ The question is whether it is possible to prevent the splitting of the Hungarian working class. If not, Hungary will slip further into the bourgeois camp. Comrade Erich Honecker remarked that he remembers quite well the events of 1956 and the role Imre Nagy played.

Source: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR-Bundesarchiv, SED, ZK, JIV2/2A/3225

Translated by Christiaan Hetzner
The National Security Archive

all 161 contested seats. (65% of these seats were reserved in advance for the ruling coalition).

³ The discussion between Erich Honecker and Wojciech Jaruzelski took place on 22 May 1989 in Berlin.

⁴ On the 16 June 1989 in Budapest, former Hungarian Prime Minister Imre Nagy, executed in 1958, together with four other colleagues [Pal Maleter, Geza Losonczy, Miklos Gimes, Jozsef Szilagyi] similarly executed, were ceremoniously reburied.

⁵ Imre Pozsgay, elected to the HSWP Politburo in March 1988, had for example, in a ZDF [West German] television program airing 3 June 1989, called "What now, Mr. Pozsgay?", described the Prague Spring of 1968 as a reform attempt, whose outcome must be awaited.

Not for citation or publication without permission.

Document 32.
Agreement on the Establishment of a National Roundtable.
The Full Text of the Signed Agreement.
June 10, 1989.



AGREEMENT
on the commencement of substantial political negotiations
between the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, the members of the Opposition
Roundtable and the organisations of the Third Side
June 10, 1989

I.

The necessity to help the nation out of a serious political and economic crisis, and the democratic transformation of the conditions of power appropriate the dialogue between all the political circles that feel responsible for the future. Handling the crisis and creating a multiparty system is only possible with the agreement of the democratic forces. It presupposes that mutual interests and intents are taken into account, that all participants are willing to make an agreement, and it necessitates trust and self-restraint.

The fate of the nation can be bettered with respecting the requirements of the constitution and firmly refusing violence. It is our mutual interest that social conflicts are solved according to the generally agreed norms of the European political culture: with public consent. The transition from a single-party system to representational democracy and the constitutional state can only be realised with free elections. Well-functioning representative bodies and a firm, self-consistent government that is trusted by the people are needed to stop the aggravating social and economic crisis. The peaceful political transition and the relief of aggravated economic and social tension can only be realised in mutual correlation. An array of historical examples warn us that common problems can only be solved with consensus. All civil organisations and movements have to take part side by side in the hard and contradictory process of transition.

On the basis of these facts and correlation, organisations of the Opposition Roundtable, the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, the Left Wing Alternative Union; the Patriotic People's Front; the Hungarian Democratic Youth Association; the Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists; the National Council of Hungarian Women; the joint delegation of the Ferenc Münnich Society and the National Council of Trade Unions express their wish to commence substantial political negotiations. The equal negotiators accept the following governing principles for the talks:

- the basis of power is the sovereignty of the people; none of the political forces can monopolise it and declare themselves the sole repository of people's will, and none can aspire for unconstitutionally curtailing political rights;
- the will of the public has to be expressed without preceding limitations, in the course of free elections, the result of which is binding for everyone, and from which no political organisation that complies with the requirements of the constitution can be excluded;
- handling the crisis, ensuring a democratic transition and resolving political conflicts is only possible in a peaceful way, avoiding violence; none of the civil organisations can have direct control over military forces;
- an important condition of the successful and constructive political negotiations is that the nation and one another's interests are considered and respected; a further condition is the mutual and anticipatory confidence;
- only mutually acceptable conditions can be the basis of co-operation and agreement;
- when determining the participants of negotiations and their legal standing, exclusion of a political nature is unacceptable, although the functioning of the negotiation process must be considered;

- the objective of negotiations is the forming of political agreements that can be accompanied by the necessary government measures and bills, together with the deadline of their realisation; the negotiations themselves, however, do not directly exercise functions of constitutional law;
- during the course of negotiations the parties refrain from all unilateral steps that would obliterate the goal of negotiations; legislation cannot precede political agreement;
- all negotiating partners will have the political agreements accepted in their own organisations, and represent it in public as well, while assisting the enforcement of the agreements by every possible political means.

II.

1. Three parties take part in the political conciliation talks, with the intent of reaching political agreements.

a) The Opposition Roundtable (Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Friendship Society; Alliance of Young Democrats; Independent Smallholders' and Farmers' Civic Party; Christian Democratic People's Party; Hungarian Democratic Forum; Hungarian People's Party; Hungarian Social Democratic Party; Alliance of Free Democrats; and the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions as observer);

b) Hungarian Socialist Workers Party;

c) The following civil organisations and movements: Left Wing Alternative Union; the Patriotic People's Front; Hungarian Democratic Youth Association; the Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists; the National Council of Hungarian Women; the Ferenc Münnich Society and the National Council of Trade Unions.

All three negotiating partners are endowed with equal rights in forming a consensus. A speaker each represents all three parties, who express the opinions of the negotiating parties. Civil associations and movements listed under point c) above, whose participation in substantial negotiations was agreed by the Opposition Roundtable as a compromise during preparatory talks, do express that they support the intention of both the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party and the Opposition Roundtable to conduct a constructive dialogue and reach an agreement. They intend to take an active part in the negotiation process. The Opposition Roundtable determines the number and composition of their delegates. Civil associations and movements listed under point c) above decide between themselves about the way of reconciliation and the method of joint representation of their disputable issues.

1. Representatives of the partaking organisations are endowed with a written mandate, which contains their right to making agreements. They present their mandate to the president of the plenary session.

2. The fourth end of the negotiating table can be reserved for observers. Observers have the right of submitting their possible remarks in writing to the president of the meeting, who informs the negotiating parties about the observation.

3. The negotiating parties put on the agenda of conciliatory talks the following issues:

- defining the rules and principles of realising a democratic political transition;
- strategic tasks of overcoming the impending economic and social crisis.

Final definition of individual issues, based on specific interests, is the task of substantial negotiations.

1. The statutes and working order of the political conciliatory talks is as follows:

a) Substantial negotiations are conducted in plenary sessions and in committees.

The opening plenary session is scheduled on 13 June 1989 (Tuesday) in the Hunters' Hall of Parliament.

The Speaker of the House presides over the whole meeting.

Representatives of all three negotiating parties are given equal time to speak.

In the course of the opening plenary session, negotiating partners issue a declaration of intent. Then they form working committees.

b) Agreements are prepared by working committees, according to specific issues on the agenda. Statutes of the plenary session logically refer to committee sessions as well.

Working committees can form sub-committees — with the participation of experts.

c) Preparing bills for legislation must involve governmental bodies as well. In the course of political conciliatory talks, some propositions may be exposed to public debate. Final documents are ratified by the plenary session. Propositions of the working committees can only be submitted to the plenary session when heads of delegations have signed them. The approved documents are signed by the heads of the delegations who then take care of their publication. Every session is recorded in minutes, which has to be publicised in case the negotiations are intermitted.

d) Coming to an agreement is our mutual interest, based on the principle of consensus. Should discord persist in a particular detail, consensus can be reached nevertheless, provided that the dissenting negotiating partner admits that it does not concern the general principle of the agreement.

e) Plenary sessions are open for the press. Working committees, however, are operating behind closed doors. It has to be assured that the public receives regular and substantial information about the negotiation process. From time to time, negotiating parties issue a joint communiqué to the Hungarian Telegraphic Agency. Separate statements can only be issued if negotiations break off or a common declaration cannot be agreed on.

Nevertheless, this does not concern the right of the parties to express their opinions about the content of certain issues on the agenda.

f) The parties think it necessary that expenses of the negotiations are covered by the state budget. Handling of documents, photocopying, postage, the costs of organising meetings, and the wages of possible experts are included in the expenses.

Representing the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party:

György Fejtő

Secretary of the Central Committee

Representing the Opposition Roundtable:

Dr. Zsolt Zétényi

Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Friendship Society

Dr. László Kövér

Federation of Young Democrats

Péter Hardi

Independent Smallholders' and Farmers' Civic Party

György Szakolczai

Christian Democratic People's Party

Dr. László Sólyom
Hungarian Democratic Forum

Csaba Varga
Hungarian People's Party

Tibor Baranyai
Social Democratic Party of Hungary

Dr. Péter Tölgyessy
Alliance of Free Democrats

Imre Kerényi
Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions, as observer

Representing the Left Wing Alternative Union; the Patriotic People's Front; the Hungarian Democratic Youth Association; the Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists; the National Council of Hungarian Women; the joint delegation of the Ferenc Münnich Society and the National Council of Trade Unions:

Csaba Kemény
Left Wing Alternative Union

Dr. István Kukorelli
Patriotic People's Front

Ferenc Gyurcsány
Hungarian Federation of Democratic Youth

Imre Kerekes
Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists

Mrs. Soós Dr. Mária Dobos
National Council of Hungarian Women

Ferenc Berényi
Ferenc Münnich Society

Mrs. Kósa Dr. Magda Kovács
National Council of Trade Unions

Document 33.

Record of Conversation between Gorbachev and Chancellor Kohl, Bonn
[The End of the Brezhnev Doctrine]
June 12, 1989.



Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and Chancellor of FRG H. Kohl
Bonn (one-on-one)
[The End of the Brezhnev Doctrine]
June 12, 1989

Kohl. [. . .] I know George Bush for a long time, we have a very good friendly relationship. In giving him an evaluation as a President, after just several months on the job, we have to take into account his previous career.

George Bush was Vice President under President Reagan for eight years. He was always a loyal person, in this respect we probably have a common point of view, we perceive such qualities as positive. However, for George Bush personally, such an assessment had a negative aspect, hurt him, because everybody was constantly asking whether he would be able to come out of Reagan's shadow, and to acquire his own political face, or whether he would always remain in the position of loyalty.

In terms of public relations, Bush has a long way to go to compete with Reagan: he has neither the actor charisma, nor the art to communicate with people via TV, nor any other similar qualities. He is an intellectual. In America they distinguish between people from the West coast and from the East coast. People from California are very different from people from Western United States [sic - should be: Eastern United States -- trans.].

In this sense Bush, as a politician, is very important for Europe--he has a more European vision of things than Reagan had. By the way, Reagan, as a politician, grew literally in front of my eyes. I know him since 1979 when he still was the leader of the opposition. One time he came to Bonn, I received him, and we talked for 3 hours. Helmut Schmidt, who was Chancellor then, did not receive him, stating that he did not have time. I had a depressing impression from that conversation with Reagan. It came out that he did not understand anything in European affairs. My assistant [Horst] Telchik was present at that conversation, and he can tell you even now how discouraged we were then. But later Reagan became President, and you, Mr. Gorbachev, were able to find a common language with him.

Bush is a completely different person. Do not forget that he inherited a difficult domestic political situation, first of all in terms of the economy. Now the ghost of the united European market, which will be created in 1992, is knocking on the U.S. door. Japanese entrepreneurs are working in the United States, and they are capturing new positions all the time. The living standards of the U.S. population, and first of all of the disadvantaged strata, continue to stagnate.

Recently I had a chance to see it with my own eyes. Last week I flew to America on a personal, unofficial trip, to visit my son, who took exams at Harvard University. I spoke with students and with professors--and I did not hear any positive assessments of how the American people now live from anybody. Bush has an overwhelming load of things to do in the social sphere, which could become his Achilles heel. At the same time, in Congress his situation is more favorable than the one that Reagan had. I would say that dramatic changes have happened there. The current [Democratic] leader of Congress [i.e. House of Representatives], [Rep.] Tom Foley, represents a politician of a quiet, non-aggressive type. He is oriented toward cooperation, not confrontation, he wants to build a positive political capital for himself, so that in the future he could become a presidential candidate from the Democrats. In short, it is important to follow American domestic developments, and to account for them in formulating your own political line.

[...]

Gorbachev. I had many meetings with Bush, including personal meetings. Last time we talked in [New York City in] December of last year [1988], when he had already been elected President. We agreed on a confidential basis, that we would develop Soviet-American relations on the basis of the following formula: continuity, plus what we should supplement it with. There are a lot of sensitive issues in our relations, that is why it is important to improve the trust between Moscow and Washington. So far, I have not noticed any significant deviations from the agreement on Bush's part. However, as I have already mentioned, his last speeches gave us grounds for concern.

Kohl. Are you talking about his statements on arms control? What speeches do you have in mind?

Gorbachev. The speech at the University of Texas on May 12, and the speech at the Coast Guard Academy [on 24 May]. Also, he made quite unpleasant statements concerning Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union at the [6 March] conference "Veterans of Foreign Wars" before Americans of Polish origin, and so on. This is what comes to mind. However, there were other statements of this kind in the last months too. I don't see either a realism or a constructive line in those statements. Frankly speaking, those statements reminded us of Reagan's statements about the "crusade" against socialism. He appealed to the forces of freedom, called for the end to the "status quo," and for "pushing socialism back." And all this at a time when we are calling for de-ideologization of the relations. Unwillingly, the questions comes to mind--where is genuine Bush, and where is Bush rhetorical? Where does he just play up the rhetoric, and where does he lay down the state line?

Kohl. We will wait and see. I am convinced that everything will take its course, and with a good speed. There will be progress in disarmament also. Here everything depends on the two great powers.

If we can achieve a decisive progress in Vienna in the next 12-15 months, it would change the situation on all arms control issues in a crucial way. Now there are no taboos or unresolvable problems any more.

[...] We are watching the developments in Hungary with a great interest. The United States, and of course you, Mr. General Secretary, are following them too. I told Bush that as far as Hungary is concerned, we are acting on the basis of an old German proverb: let the church remain in the village. It means that the Hungarians should decide themselves what they want, but nobody should interfere in their affairs.

Gorbachev. We have a similar proverb: you do not go to somebody's monastery with your charter.

Kohl. Beautiful folk wisdom. Both sides adhere to it. And if so, there could be no talk about any "crusades".

Gorbachev. I am telling you honestly--there are serious shifts underway in the socialist countries. Their direction originates from concrete situations in each country. The West should not be concerned about it. Everything moves in the direction of a strengthening of

the democratic basis. Every country decides on its own how it does it. It is their internal affair. I think you would agree with me that you should not stick a pole into an anthill. Consequences of such an act could be absolutely unpredictable.

Kohl. There is an opinion of one side, there is an opinion of another side, but there is also a third opinion--a common opinion. This is a common opinion of the Soviet Union, of the United States, of the FRG, and of other countries. In short, we should not interfere with anybody's development.

Gorbachev. There is a very tense situation in a number of countries. If someone was going to try to destabilize the situation, it would disrupt the process of building trust between the West and the East, and destroy everything that has been achieved so far. We want a rapprochement, not a return to the positions of confrontation.

[...]

Kohl. However, it is not a secret to anybody, that Erich Honecker is not inclined to undertake any changes or reforms, and thus he himself destabilizes the situation.

I have problems because of that in the FRG. I say all the time that I am not interested in destabilizing the situation in the GDR. However, the people ask me all the time, why does the GDR remain on frozen positions[?] I am told that we should do something in order to let the people there experience the same freedom that now characterizes Hungary, Poland, and, of course, the Soviet Union.

You cannot imagine what was going on here when the GDR banned the distribution of Soviet magazine "Sputnik". Everybody was laughing. But I did not. Because they demanded that I, as Chancellor, take new steps for the improvement of relations with the GDR, and I could not do anything about it.

Gorbachev. As far as our friends are concerned, we have a firm principle: everyone is responsible for his own country. We are not going to teach anybody, but we are not asking anybody to teach us either. I think that what I have just said makes it clear whether there is any "Brezhnev Doctrine." We are in favor of positive changes in all spheres, in favor of political normalization, of strengthening of the economy, but at the same time also in favor of preserving the special features and traditions of the socialist states.

[...]

Kohl. I support your ideas. To tell you honestly, we understand Moscow much better, and we feel much closer to it than to [East] Berlin now. 90% of the population in the GDR watch our television. They are informed about everything, but afraid to speak publicly. I just feel sorry for the people. But let me reiterate that I am not doing anything to destabilize the situation. This applies to Hungary, and Poland, as well. To interfere with anybody's internal political development now would mean to take a destructive line which would throw Europe back to the times of caution and mistrust.

Gorbachev. This is a very important statement, it fits the spirit of the time.

Kohl. [...] As far as the conventional weapons are concerned, the key to this issue is in

your hands. We have a real opportunity to reach an agreement, and in a fundamental sense, on conventional weapons in the next 12, or if not, then in the next 14-15 months. An agreement on conventional weapons would put all the arms control agenda on a qualitatively new level. I will be one of those who will make a clear and sound statement about it.

I would like to propose to you, Mr. General Secretary, that in the next several months we should stay in direct contact--not via departments--on the issues of negotiations in Vienna. And in general, I believe that we should intensify our contacts, call each other more often, even if there is no concrete business to discuss. If we talk regularly, hear each other's voices, all problems would be easier to solve.

As far as special representatives are concerned, as I have already told you, I will send my closest assistant Telchik who is present here. And you can send Chernyaev to me.

Gorbachev. I agree.

Kohl. We are not exaggerating our role, but we are not underestimating it either. Others will listen to our opinion more and more. I can already feel it.

Gorbachev. We need to cooperate more closely, because our cooperation can produce very effective impulses and lead to positive changes on still unresolved issues.

Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Notes of A.S. Chernyaev

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya
for The National Security Archive

Document 34.
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
June 13, 1989.



Meeting of the MSZMP Political Committee

June 13, 1989

Verbatim Record of Minutes

[Subject:] **Discussion on the domestic political situation and the state of affairs of the party**

Imre Pozsgay: [...] And now let us turn to the trends and groups. First I would like to speak about the Movement for Democratic Hungary. Some of our comrades are influenced by the over-zealous and the ones who interpret everything concerning this issue as well. This movement just came into being, this is not an authorized movement, it just came into being. I have always thought that one of the main problems of the party and the over-centralized organization, one of their problems of control has always been that only authorized movements existed, and I think we have left that era behind, and we realize that something has changed among party members. It might be only one fifth of the members, or one tenth, but something has definitely moved, and someone has to react to this movement somehow.

I did not set up a movement. The central committee members who are part of it did not set up a movement, they just reacted in a way to what had been voiced in Szeged, what had been [voiced] in the circles of the reform workshop. It has to be decided whether it is advantageous to the party or not, but I think it is. This firm belief has been my starting point. Since it is not the only task of our party to create its own centre – it does not bring far. Look at what has happened to the Polish United Workers' Party – the same thing could happen to us at the elections and then we are in trouble. This party should get to the centre of the people [sic]. And we would never win the elections if there were no movements and gestures like this, which may arise from this formation and may play the role of inspiring confidence, that is, it might prove that the party already has a great and valuable section which is already capable of communicating with the people. The fact that I say this does not mean I look down on other people's – I would like to say something about the one associated with Ribánszki in particular – and on other people's initiatives, but if we do not take this attitude, than the paralysis which had been characteristic of this party under democratic centralism will tie up our hands at the most critical historical turning points. Without this dynamism we could possibly drive together our own centre anyway, but it is more than likely that we would be still unable to get into the centre of the people. It will not happen through the Movement for a Democratic Hungary – it is only one factor, but it is worth paying attention to it, to its values. I mean one should not pay attention to the suspicious voices without suspicion and one should not be influenced by those who are suspicious, one had better try to find the advantageous aspects, the possible results.

[...] Now, to the question of whether the leadership had been aware of this or not. I would like to make it clear that I am not the leader of this movement. I was put on top of the list out of politeness; the same thing would be done to anyone else, and I volunteered in the spirit of ideas I have just been touching upon to... for the sake of people who are involved, some trend... not to organize a party, on the contrary, to create something that would also build relations with other parties... You should read the notice, and also what I said. In that very moment it would all be clear. The other thing is that this initiative and others like it – although I do not want to create a burden for

anyone else with my remarks here –, similar movements and gestures are either graspable for the party or destined to fade out. There are only these two alternatives.

[...] The defeats of this party have mostly originated in the fact that it had been unable to incorporate the initiatives coming from outside, from members in contact with the outside world; its first reaction to such initiatives has always been automatic rejection, and when it tried to grab them later, it did not get the credit, and the initiatives then did not become part of the movement of the party. What I have in mind is that a modern party which accepts party pluralism should be quite capable of internalising this chance for movement, or else it would be attracted by others, since people are trying to find orientation. If you believe me when I say that this is not about jockeying for power, in this sense I am not motivated by making my personal base stronger when I participate in a movement like this, then you have to accept that this is for the party, this is meant to be to the party's advantage.

[...] The Ribánszki-group, whatever, the Marxist centre, or whatever – it is a bit more complicated. What has been pointed out by comrade Grósz is its biggest risk. This group has opted out of the consensus which can even be secured – well, I believe in the afternoon we will see anyway – with the opposition. When the country is in trouble, resorting to social demagogy is a low and an evil thing to do in politics. It amounts to selling out the nation. This must be clearly stated. In order to achieve that the workers believe it – since they really have had enough, together with various other groups of society – to make them believe us, I have to say again what I have pointed out already at the press conference: we have to show who these people are. They are exactly the ones who are the depositaries of the system that pushed the country to where it is now, the system which induced this situation. And then we can point at the very persons, because if he does not take a step... I do not care, they can organize whatever they want to, they can make their own little nest to feel at home, let them feel great among each other. They cannot feel good anywhere else, anyway. Let them organize their own party, I do not care, but this lowly, evil thing should be rejected. Whoever starts to strike the cords of social demagogy – I can only imagine him on a flag of skull and bones. (*Nyers: What can we do? Should we put him into jail?*) No. We should... call the attention of the public to it. (*Nyers: Do we want to ban them?*) No, I do not want to ban them at all. God forbid! No. We should make it public who they are and what they want. (*Nyers: Then they will start making trouble, too, and we are going to be in it all the same.*) We have survived. (*Nyers: Of course we should do this politically, this exposure, I mean. But we should not do it, because everybody has a skeleton in the cupboard to a certain extent. If we look at politics from this perspective, which is of course a stupid perspective, everybody is in it to the waist.*) We will have to talk about it, what can be done with them. Anyway, publicity is the only thing that can be of any help. (*Nyers: The party should separate from them, that is what we should do.*) But we there is no danger in pointing out that social demagogy (*Nyers: Naturally, we should, but it is another issue-*) is a breach of the consensus. (*Nyers: Other types of demagogy as well, including the nationalistic demagogy, too.*) Yes, the same way.

[...] About statements abroad. If it is brought up at the session of the Central Committee, I am prepared to talk about it, of course. I do not think there have been no mistakes, but I take responsibility for all my words, my original statements – not interpretations of the press –, everything I said can be checked, it is open to enquiry, I said everything in the presence of responsible persons of our embassies. Obviously it will be me who has to react to those statements of mine if they come up at the session of the Central Committee.

[...]

Rezső Nyers: [...] As far as the internal affairs of the party are concerned – concerning the Ribánszki group, I agree. Comrade Grósz has characterized them in general, comrade Pozsgay has characterized them in particular, I agree with what they said, I agree with everything except for the expression 'selling out the nation'. Let us be careful with this expression, because it had been used by Rákosi and his circles, Stalin used expressions like that. Let us be careful with it. Selling out the nation is... this is not a debate on issues of the nation, this is a debate on issues of the society. Those people are stupid. Plain stupid. If they are selling out the nation, they should be thrown into jail. I am just asking. It is no use. But please understand this, this is dangerous... It indicates that Ribánszki and his circle are trying to attack where we are weak, where they can take some turf with their ideology. And that is the workers' group. The workers.

I am glad to read in *Népszabadság* that a thousand people were invited in Csepel, and only 300 showed up, saying it in a provocative way. But it is also a reason for lamenting that 300 people did actually show up. (*Interruption: It was not Ribánszki.*) Yes, it was him indeed. (*Interruption: It was definitely not Ribánszki and his people.*) Please, please, in Csepel. Then it was someone else. It was in the press that they were in Csepel, in Csepel indeed, and Ribánszki made a presentation on Sunday. He is also the Csepel secretary. I read it in *Népszabadság*. This morning, in today's paper. I read about this Csepel case, and they say it was a thousand people.

(*Interruptions: It was there. And in DANUVIA. Both places. I have not read that, only in the Bányász.*) Yes, yes. The atmosphere tells us a lot, let us analyse this a little bit. One must learn from the opponent as well. Whether he is an opponent or an enemy is unclear yet. Probably he is more of an enemy. God knows who else is there. But until they act according to democratic rules, what can we do, we have to let them do it. But we will have to talk about the party policy.

As far as the Movement for a Democratic Hungary is concerned. It is a tendency, one must accept that. I think the only obvious complication has come up concerning the circumstances of organising it. Well, it would have been better if comrade Pozsgay had recounted what he was aware of when he became aware of it. He only recounted it, when... I do not know if it was the day before, or on the same day – but anyway, it was a mistake of presentation. (*Imre Pozsgay: I was not present at two meetings of the Political Committee.*) Well, even if it was not organized correctly, you know. (*Imre Pozsgay: I was invited.*) We are colleagues here, we are comrades, we are engaged in politics together. Here, this is not... It is also their fault. I know it is not you alone who is doing politics, other people are doing politics with you. They are making politics with you. We have to look at it this way as well. There are some nice people doing politics with you, and there are some who are not so nice. By the way the same is true of me, there are some nice people doing politics with me, and there are some who are not so nice. We have to take it like this. One should be careful when one is congratulated to. (*Laughter.*) Well, to what did you congratulate now? One should not accept every congratulation. Well, I see no problems here apart from this. If you read it, it is the same as that of the March Front. I am in the March Front, I have nothing against this. And there are some overlaps, people who are in this one and the other one as well. There is a group of people who are in both. So, for God's sake, I do not consider this to be on the same level as Ribánszki and his group.

Now, to comrade Berecz's organising job. Excuse me, but I do not know a better description of it than 'comrade Berecz's organising job'. Uniting, as it is, the silent majority. I think we should just accept it. It triggered panic in a lot of comrades, too. They thought, "You will see now, that it has started at the party academy as well"... All right, but then, the problem is that we are indeed becoming differentiated in this case when the phase of integration, or if not that, at least the phase of cooperation should be prevailing now. We are delayed in this respect as well. We have to think it over carefully – what we do next.

Well, there are positive things, too. We should also account for them. I consider the last session of Parliament a slight shift in the right direction. It might be the case that this Parliament will be able to accomplish its tasks until the end of the year, or the beginning of next year. It is not sure, but possible. But we still have to do something in this respect. I am still of the opinion that the party – all of us together – should take steps to stop this anti-democratic abuse of an insufficient constitution through calling them back. If we are unable to do this, if we can not make a stand together, then both the party and the government will be compromised. We should get rid of the ones who are intolerable. If Barcs is so intolerable, well, I can not name anyone off the cuff, Korom fortunately has already left. Perhaps we still have a couple of comrades there who just should not be there, but it is not György Aczél or István Sarlós, and I do not know who said that they would resign from the Central Committee and all that, and they would be organising a movement. It is not them who should leave. Those people belong to the centre. (*Károly Grósz: Yesterday in Baranya, the calling back of Lajos Horváth and Aczél has initiated.*) Well, Lajos Horváth. It is difficult to understand why, it is only a matter of cabinet policy. No political reason whatsoever. He has never been left-wing in his life, I guess. Maybe until '56? I do not know him. He was not on the left in '56, and he has not been on the left ever since. (*Károly Grósz: He was not conspicuous.*) Yes. These people. And so we pull ourselves together and...

The other thing is, well, that I can imagine as a political step – by the way, I see a chance in Parliament for us to get stronger, this is one of the key issues – the other thing is that we could organize our work in Parliament more efficiently.

Still another thing is that the opposition is perhaps also thinking hard, at least its real politicians. Not all of them are [smart]. There are, unfortunately, a lot of people of ideology among them as well. But the real politicians among them might think about these events in Poland, and in China, and in the Soviet Union. And perhaps they would realize what the interest of the nation, the real national interest is. So I regard this as a positive thing that we should make use of.

Now the press and this media thing. Now even outsiders are saying it, foreigners as well, I have talked about it with an ambassador, too, that they can not really digest television and radio like ours. They can not imagine it. So, something has to be done. The government, the party can not extend their influence. No. It is over-politicized, and it exposes the system every day. It can not be done like this any longer.

It should provide every opinion an opportunity to appear. Of course, it is also the fault of the political situation, not of the television alone. They are apolitical. Well, if this is the case, so be it... There is no need – but if our public life is also apolitical and ideological, I have to say this, this is what they report. But the government and the establishment can not be allowed to do this. We need to build up some serious influence to avoid the situation where the MSZMP appoints the president and the SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats) and the MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) provide the programmes. This is no good. No good at all. The social democrats are also

complaining, they are being excluded, too, they are not even allowed by [these]... well, little groups to come near. Therefore, perhaps you can not even say that they serve the opposition. Not even that. They are serving partial interests, and it is not even beneficial for those who they think are served by them. It is no good for them, either. Thus, there should be a government organ, an organ of Parliament, and between the two, a national administrative organization – something like this should be created in cooperation with them.

Now, as far as the right wing is concerned. Yes, we have to dissociate ourselves from the right in some way. We have to reflect on it. The *Népszabadság* has done it, more or less, comrade Grósz has been doing this for a long time, but we also have to state that on quite a few occasions he did it in an unfortunate way. This has caused some problems: [talking about] the counter-revolution and the white terror; there have been problems. Nevertheless, I do admit that it is necessary to dissociate ourselves from the right. It is still quite striking, the thing that happened at a sports event. I am glad that the *Népszabadság's* attention also turned to it. Well, I was grabbed by at least ten people yesterday. I was just walking in the street and I was grabbed by people in the street, not the kind of left-wing people, there were also non-party men among them [who talked about] what happened in Békéscsaba. (*Interruptions: What happened? Fradi-fans again? They always pop into mind.*) No, not Fradi, something worse than that. Dózsa has a group like that as well. [...] Well, what happens? The team wins the cup – and this is a 'Liberation' cup – and the team does not accept it, someone says so, and the team says OK, as if they were paralysed. It is not true that everybody was thinking like that, but still, they followed the order, they do not accept the prize because it was the Russian occupation and not Liberation. But you have not heard everything yet. At the announcement of results, they read it out into the microphone, and the crowd is listening to it, appalled, the whole statement, that the Soviet troops in fact occupied us. It was not liberation, therefore we do not take this cup, whatever, and so on... And everybody is paralysed... Everybody is standing there... (*Interruption: What was it – a basketball game?*) I do not know. Basketball, or I would guess... it was basketball. (*Interruption: the finals of the Liberation Cup, four teams were playing, and TUNGSRAM was the winner.*) So it was basketball. The interesting thing is that they just did not take the cup. I can picture this, this stupid guy, talking the girls into it, not to take the cup. The worrying thing is that it was a gesture of propaganda and the country just take it in. Things like this do happen these days, this is where our political weakness lies.

[...] One has to be able to defend the Kádár-era. Its good side, that is, the decade of the '60s. We have to be able to pick it out. If we can not pick out the decade of the 60's, we are in trouble. I mean to include the reforms of '68 as well. Not because I was involved in it. No. Not at all... What do I care... I know its shortcomings and all its wonders. But if we talk about it like we do now, like it had been nothing... not us, we do not talk about it, we do not even defend ourselves, but the liberals, there are the bourgeois liberals and of course the anti-communists [who say] it was nothing and that the Stalinist system stayed the same. If the Stalinist system had stayed the same, then it has been a Stalinist system up to now, and then we have to realize that it can not be reformed at all. Then we can not reform it at all. But then we can not be reformed, either, and we are unable to reform anything. Then we have to state who is the one who wants to do something else, and what that would be. No one has said so far what anyone would want. So we have to defend this idea somehow, that the system of Kádár was a hybrid one. A shift – away from Stalinism. It was not complete and in a lot of

aspects – especially that of political institutions – it was not much of a change compared with the Stalinist system, but in terms of the economic system it was indeed a lot better. It did not fully transform into that other system, but it detached itself from the old one. But if the economy has anything to do with politics – and no Marxist can deny that –, then this has not been the same system, this hybrid one, this has not been the Stalinist system. And then it needs to be reformed, no revolution should be started against it. Because if someone talks about revolution, it is a completely different thing. Unfortunately, there are also hazy ideas like that in circulation. It even made me cross over into ideology – you see, this is what happens when you take part in these ideological struggles. Probably, this is impossible to clear up altogether as it is, but then at least we should not take part in it. We should think politically. And so I think we should strive to set up a more creditable leadership everywhere, if possible, and as soon as possible. Thank you.

[...]

György Fejti: I also agree that as much as possible, we should talk about the domestic political situation in a differentiated and balanced way but also openly, and pinpointing the problems themselves, and also about the state of affairs of the party and the events unfolding all around us, without distracting our attention too much, of course. Because it makes one really think what has happened in Poland and China. Those events are already affecting us today, and they will affect us even more in the long run. I have the feeling that these events – and the events in the Soviet Union, too – shrink the scope of our action domestically. Well, you can not see the whole picture of the Soviet Union either, but the events there also narrow the margins of our possibilities in a certain aspect. Even if I do not use the expression 'isolation'. Obviously, you can only have the full picture of the situation in Poland after the second round, but it is already quite apparent that the PUWP has suffered a spectacular defeat. It got into a very humiliating situation because, first of all, the reflex or attitude of rejection is very strong in society towards the past decades, and although the differences between the situations in Hungary and Poland are probably greater than the similarities, it is a warning sign in at least one aspect: it points out what potential dangers are hidden in a power vacuum.

Now the most important conclusion for me is that a situation has come about which could lead to explosion, or the break-up of the party. Or another road opens up, a path which has not been seriously considered in Poland, but it could be a good example for us, if it is solved the right way. One thing is certain – a completely new situation came about after the elections which was not anticipated by the Polish United Workers' Party before the elections. I think it is an essential condition of peaceful transition in Hungary to stop the MSZMP's break-up. It is necessary to have a force of integration in every society, while there are always quite significant forces of desintegration. A possible force of integration can be the church, another one can be the army. I do not think that they could play that role in Hungary at all. This is why I say our only option is keeping the party together, especially because the political re-segmentation of society, or at least the formation of a stable political structure will probably take more time than we thought. It is not just in the interest of the party when we urge the consolidation of our own state of affairs, it is a fundamental national interest as well. So, this is how we should approach it – the acceleration of integration and the improvement on our capacity of action are not simply in the interest of the party, they are necessary conditions of diverting a national catastrophe.

[...] I also agree with the people who say that in chaotic circumstances a lot of progressive processes are also under way in the confusion most people have a hard time living through. There are a lot of progressive elements, and there are good signs within the party as well, but if we look at the party as a whole we have to regard our position as critical, and its tendency as for the worse, especially if we consider the fact that in a couple of months there is a congress to be held, and the parliamentary elections are also held in a couple of months. A lot of new developments and trends are simultaneously surfacing within the party, but the position of the party as a whole is getting worse. I can not see any movement on the sides and on the surface of the party, not in the depth. The deep layers are still characterized by immobility, disintegration, scepticism, and the intensifying rejection of rhetorical struggles.

[...] I would not like to talk about the internal movements that have appeared one by one. I mostly agree with the people who have made distinctions when evaluating them. I would only add that these movements are not organized around 'ripe concepts' yet. They are groups organized around various ideologies, approaches, and essentially around personalities, which is, in itself, neither critical nor dangerous. What I consider dangerous and critical is that the efforts of the groups directed at exclusivity are strong in each case. Maybe this is only natural, perhaps it will pass, but at the moment it only intensifies desintegration and not a new unity. It is not about whether we should rehash former dreams of unity with a little nostalgia or not [*Sic!*], it is about the lack of signs of the smallest possible shift which would be more or less clear-cut, understandable, and not only for the wide-awake. To my mind, this is dangerous, and also that we lack the determination to fill in certain gaps. We are too busy fighting our more or less tactical wars.

[...] Where do we have too little energy, and where are we too late already? We were unable to re-evaluate the past as much as we could have. It can not be finished actually, but for the integrational trends to start within the party, in my opinion there are at least three conditions. The first thing we need is a more or less clear picture of our past in more than one sense, in fact, two. In terms of rejection, and in terms of keeping the values. It is a grave insufficiency that we have not moved forward concerning this issue.

The second thing is: an honest reaction to the problems of the present. These two things should and could... and what is an honest reaction to the problems of the present? – well, it can be phrased this way, it can be phrased that way. On the one hand there is this election programme which is, on the other hand, the programme of the party. For this we should pull our best resources together, the most excellent representatives of all those groups and movements.

The third thing is that we must put together a leadership which should consist of respectable persons who want to support each other and are able to support each other. If any of these three conditions is missing, the integration process will not start.

[...] Well, the most important question is whether the present leadership of our party, the wider leadership, the Central Committee, and the narrower leadership, the Political Committee, or the still narrower leadership, is able or wants to change the situation that has come about, or is its person-mix capable at all of stopping this tendency for the worse. For a long time I have been of the opinion that the composition of the narrow leadership of the party was ideal in principle since it has been able to convey messages to quite a few groups of society. I do not want to mention any names, but it has been so, that this leadership could have provided coverage of quite significant groups of society if support for each other and supplementing each other had been at the

centre of their activity. What I see is that for months it has not been so, it has been getting worse all the time. So it was not like strengthening and supplementing and providing opportunities for each other, but – and I do not imply it was purposeful, no, it was rather the result of the situation, the result of preconceptions – this process has irreversibly deteriorated. I might not see it as it really is.

A couple of months ago I still thought that the four most important leaders of our party should have appeared together in public more often, they should have held press conferences together more frequently, and they should have acted more in support of each other more often. I do not think it would be viable today. Therefore, concerning this fundamental issue of whether it is possible for us to reverse certain trends with these people, with this leadership, something must be said in the Central Committee. The answer may be yes. I do not see much of a chance personally, but it could still be yes, and then it will have to be a strategic decision, above differences of opinions and personal preferences. Putting this aside now, the members of this leadership either team up so that we would be able to prepare for an acceptable and balanced congress on the one hand, and on the other hand, for winning the elections, or we have to arrive at the necessary conclusions and create a new leadership which is more coherent and the members of which are more supportive of each other.

I think all this depends now not only on our intentions, since there is considerable polarization in the Central Committee as well, and even if we do not prepare ourselves for such a situation, it could still happen at the session of the Central Committee... it would be a disaster, the most devastating thing if we were unable to stand up against it all together, or if we were unable to pacify the situation with a constructive and careful proposal. If a self-destructive, aggravating fight was started at the session of the Central Committee. Thus, I suggest that we should use both this occasion and the time until the 19th to try and develop a position which is shared by everyone in respect of this fundamental question.

[...]

[Subject:] **The political conciliatory negotiations**

György Fejti: Comrade Grósz, I would like to add a couple of thoughts, especially concerning the future. I know that only the preparatory phase has been completed so far, and also that we have signalled again to society in view of the 16th that we are not sharpening the swords. The agreement today is not something the party would put together itself, but I think it is acceptable, it does not contain unbearable compromises at all. The main function of today's opening session is to provide an opportunity for the representatives of the three sides to make a political statement, that is, to outline their standpoints concerning the negotiations.

The significant talks will be essentially trilateral. We have suggested that an 'observer side' should also be set up in view of the fact that for some time it was uncertain whether the New March Front would like to take part as observers. A couple of days ago the Forum decided that this status was unacceptable for them. They preferred the initial concept – equal sides around a roundtable. It was not our fault that it was impossible to accomplish. At the same time, due to some kind of misunderstanding, the status of observer proved to be a flood lock, as within two days more than ten organizations called in, partly at comrade Szűrös, partly at others, to say they would like to participate in that status. Probably the three sides will have to decide

on some rational selection method, because from the Hungarian-Polish Countryside Exploring Students to the Hungarian Communist Party a couple of phantom organizations have called in as well. The rational basis of reduction would obviously be the criterium of registration – only registered organizations should participate, and of course the ones who have something to do with the topics on the agenda.

[...] An agreement has been reached on the time of the next round – it would be on 21 June. Experts would naturally go on with their discussions in the meantime as well. According to the plans, two working committees could be set up on 21 June. They would in turn create sub-committees of experts; the number of the sub-committees is to be determined later. One of the two committees would deal with the issues of political transition, the other would deal with issues of the economy and social policy. I would like to suggest that in the two committees comrade Pozsgay should be handling the political consultation concerning the issues of political transition, and comrade Nyers should be handling the issues of the economy. [...] We will be making a proposal concerning the experts who should be involved. It is enough to discuss this later.

[...] The further stages of the work is difficult to see now. Concerning the issues of political transition, it will probably be proceeding faster. There are four bills under preparation there, and consultations on them can be started right away. I would like to tell you that all the organizations know that Parliament will discuss these issues on the 27th. All organizations are prepared to talk about these four topics fast. But I still do not think we should force Parliament to deal with them on the 27th. We should work carefully, accurately and fast, of course. The experts would meet practically every day.

[...]

György Fejti: About another thing: we have signed an agreement which includes that legislation can not precede the political agreements. Only if the negotiations are stalled. So I do not think a confrontation would be reasonable in respect of this, especially because of the fact that before we signed it, we had talked about it, that is, that if the constructive discussions start concerning these bills and can not be finished by the 27th, then the negotiating sides should not be provoked with [Parliament] starting the debate on these bills. And it is possible to find a civilized solution to this. After all, we are able to influence the members of Parliament as well to a certain extent. It does not affect the sovereignty of Parliament; it flows from the fact that it is reasonable to prevent the disturbing of an ongoing negotiation by a debate in Parliament.

Mátyás Szűrös: Well, these expressions must not be used in reference to Parliament. Whatever sides are concerned. I object to this. I understand this now. The party should not have agreed to this, we should have formulated this in a more flexible way.

György Fejti: Dear Matyi, I asked you, did not I...

Mátyás Szűrös: A parliament can not be overridden like this.

Károly Grósz: But this is not so. Because if this is a transitional period now, then you are right. But in normal circumstances, where there is party pluralism, if the parties agree on something, they make their representatives implement the agreement. But we are on the road to somewhere now, like Uncle Kohn [of the joke]: there are no parties yet, and Parliament is still in its place.

[Subject:] **The reburial of Imre Nagy**

Mihály Jassó: I would like to ask whether the party is formulating a position concerning the burial. I guess you might want to talk about this, comrade Grósz. Do you not? Would you like to talk about this? If you would, then I would not.

Károly Grósz: I do not think there is a reason for us to make a decision on representation, since the Central Committee's position has been formulated.

Mihály Jassó: The Committee for Historical Justice has rejected it. We can not even be present as an official body.

Károly Grósz: I wanted to raise an issue that I already have, at the meeting of the apparatus. Whether there should be a flag on the house.

Mihály Jassó: The other thing is what we should do with the flag.

Károly Grósz: It does matter, the flag. A black one, the national flag, and a red one. But we do not have three poles. (*Iványi: A red ribbon and a black ribbon.*) That would be sufficient as well. That has been the second option. The third option has been a red one, the national one, and a black ribbon should be tied over or onto them. We... previously the tradition has been to have a black one. (*Rezső Nyers: If we put up a flag at all, then it should be black.*) (*Pozsgay: That is the most simple solution, a black flag.*) So nothing else: no red, no purple, no white. We have not declared him as our own dead anywhere. So it would not be problematic if we did not put up a flag at all. But why should not we do it? After the resolution of the Central Committee why should not we? (*Jassó: That is clear.*) There is no... reason for not doing it.

[...]

Károly Grósz: One could put up whatever one pleases. They do it differently everywhere. They put up whatever they think is right. We will put up the black flag on the house. (*Németh: There is no need to make a standard.*) They put up whatever they want. We will put up the black flag. (*Mrs. Takács: So we put up a black one?*) Yes, a black one. It has been black on other occasions. Only a black one. The other day it was raised what the three-flag option or the two-flag option implies. The most simple solution is this: let us put up the black one.

Document 35.
The Opening Plenary Session of the National Roundtable Negotiations.
Verbatim Record of Minutes.
June 13, 1989.



Opening Full Session of the National Roundtable Negotiations

June 13, 1989

(Transcript of the video recording. Excerpts.)

[...]

Károly Grósz: Ladies and Gentlemen, my Honourable Compatriots, there are few positive events going on in our hectic world nowadays. A lot of people face the future with anxiety and uncertainty. Against this background, let me greet with confidence and optimism the participants of this meeting and those who are going to follow the beginning of real political negotiations in front of the TV screens in Hungary and abroad. [...] Just a few months ago, at the February meeting of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, we arrived at the conclusion that we have to find a peaceful transition into the representative democracy based on party pluralism and presupposing a competition between the parties. Our resolution met with the political goals of all those, whose representatives are sitting at this table together. We are responsible for the success of this undertaking not only to the Hungarian people, but also to the community of nations. The public is looking forward to, and is concerned about the outcome of this attempt at the same time. [...]

Let me stress that we do not intend to exaggerate or appropriate the results of the building of the democratic constitutional state that have been attained so far. In our opinion, apart from the political realism of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, these results were due to the social organizations and movements present and the constructive efforts of the evolving parties. It is our solid determination to separate ourselves from the remnants of the Stalinist model. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, together with other political forces, strives to build a democratic and socialist constitutional state which asserts the intention of the people. We expect the economic and political reforms based on public consensus to help us overcome the economic crisis and to enable us to approach the most developed regions of the world, instead of being irreversibly pushed to the periphery. Apart from the universal values of peace and humanism, we are trying to find socialist solutions that are particularly Hungarian. We observe our obligations towards our allies, at the same time, we are striving to create a Europe without blocks. [...] The stakes are high. The negotiations entering a new phase should provide programs based on a consensus in as many issues as possible. This is the precondition for the forming of a viable coalition and for avoiding that party pluralism in Hungary is paralyzed by the petty disputes of the parties. For this reason we must concentrate on the common points instead of the differences between us. I am convinced that these negotiations can foster the development of a viable coalition and of future political alliances. It would be too early to predict the content of these. Reviewing interests and programs properly, however, can guarantee a lucrative political cooperation.

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party has started to transform from a bureaucratic state-party into a left-wing socialist reform party. It urges, for example, differentiation based on performance, at the same time it also aims to reduce social differences that can not be accounted for by performance. It strives for economic efficiency, without disregarding social solidarity. Its goal is to achieve that private

property foments economic performance, while it insists on the determining role of efficiently operating public property.

[...]

Imre Kónya: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Hungary has belonged to the Hungarian people de jure for a thousand years. This is so, notwithstanding the fact that during its history the people could hardly dispose of their property as owners or free citizens, in spite of trying to take possession of it from time to time.

Assuming our historical responsibility and in accordance with our agreement with the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, we, the delegates of the Opposition Roundtable organizations, have appeared today at the Parliament in order to start negotiations with the representatives of the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the delegates of other organizations it invited. We wish to put it on record that the goal of the negotiations is to assure peaceful transition from the existing dictatorial ruling system into a representative democracy that really asserts the will of the people. In the course of the negotiations we do not wish to divide power between ourselves and those who are holding it now. We do not wish to exercise power above the people's head, without being entitled to it by the people. Our aim is to enable Hungarian citizens to decide who, which political forces they commission to exercise power during the periods extending from elections to elections. [...]

After thirty years of numbness, our society has finally risen. The formation of independent organizations and of large-scale demonstrations indicate that it wants to control its own fate. It is not only our moral obligation to facilitate that, but also our common interest, moreover, many of us believe that it has already become the precondition for our nation's survival. A reliable and already tested form of the continuous assertion of the will of the people is the representative democracy. The peaceful method of its creation is free elections.

We are convinced that free elections will not only lead to the significant revival of public life and policy-making, but it can also affect the fate and history of our nation. We must be aware that free elections can only be held in a society which has been freed from its fears and suspicions. And fears and suspicions take time to fade out.

Burying the martyrs of the Revolution and commencing these talks can mark the beginning of national reconciliation. Real reconciliation, however, can only be achieved by burying the existing dictatorial power system. That can only be done by depoliticizing repressive organizations and through free elections.

Therefore we wish to enter into negotiations with the power-holders on the basis of the following principles. The basis of power is the sovereignty of the people. None of the political forces can appropriate sovereignty and declare itself the only representative of the will of the people. The will of the people must be expressed at free elections with open outcome, not allowing the exclusion of any party or political organization that accepts the principles of democracy and rejects the use of repressive instruments. Until the political will of the society is expressed by the election of the members of parliament, no other nation-wide elections, for example election of the president of the republic or election of local authorities, should take place. The power-holders should also accept the result of the free elections and should not try to change it by any means afterwards. A strong opposition in parliament is a basic institution of democracy, counterbalancing the

operation of the government. No political party or organization can have its own armed forces. Parties and political organizations can not exert influence on the operation of armed forces through their members. Armed forces can not be used for solving political conflicts under any circumstances. It is constitutionally legitimate to react to violence only to the extent that is necessary for abating violence. It is not enough to resign using instruments of oppression, the possibility of using them must be excluded. Workers' militia should be disbanded, the operation of political police should be contained within well-defined limits, public security police should be subordinated to local governments and the use of guns should be controlled publicly.

This is the only way people can stop being afraid, this is the only way for – not the silent but for the silenced – majority to participate in politics. We, the organizations constituting the Opposition Roundtable, see the goal of the negotiations as regulating the way political forces are going to act and be compared publicly.

At the same time, we are ready to do anything within our own range of competence, anything that is necessary to solve the conflicts brought about by the crisis, we can, however, not take responsibility for liquidating the economic bankruptcy until the elections, since opposition organizations – being in opposition – can and would only monitor those who have governed this country for forty years and have caused this situation. We are aware that the economy is about to collapse and is burying under itself the lives of several thousand people every day. Their, that is to say, our situation will not be improved by any political demagogy. The precondition for stopping economic decline is to change the political system.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that the organizations of the Opposition Roundtable did not sit down to the negotiating table in order to acquire their share of power, but in order to give rise to a situation where the people itself can acquire power without using violence, with the help of peaceful means. Hungary is the property of the people, therefore it is not necessary for the people to take by force what is its own property. The people only has to lift its head up, organize itself and take possession of the country, of its own homeland with due self-consciousness.

[...]

István Kukorelli: Mr Chairman, our Honoured Political Partners, we have initiated today's roundtable talks and we are ready to take responsibility for it, though the table, let's face it, has turned out to be rather square. It is still very significant for peaceful social development.

The agreement we also signed is the result of mutual and realistic compromises. These compromises, the arrangement of the seats, will not give rise to illusions, will not deceive the public. These three sides express a lot of things and conceal a lot of other things as well. Placing the power-holders and the opposition opposite each other can not be disputed. Democracy can hardly be imagined without an opposition protected by minority rights in the future. There is no doubt that the opposition and some other civil organizations still lack an economic infrastructure, the creation of which is a task of our negotiations and of the government.

We also have to admit, however, that the way we are seated can not represent all the major break lines in society. To mention just a few of them: the country has started to break into two along lines separating public figures who

organize themselves into parties and become the so-called elite and people who reject the formation of parties; separating the capital from the countryside; separating the haves and the have nots. And other dividing lines also appear in the structure of society. All those tensions shall be tackled by us here – we are able to do it since around the table we represent a horizontal cross-section of society as well.

Organizations that make up the third side do not pretend to appear as a unified force. They are present as independent political organizations representing the interests of their membership and their policies are formed independently on the basis of the agenda along the way. I am well aware of the fact that few people are able to find a common characteristic in this heterogeneous group intending to participate in the negotiations as an independent force. We do not make a secret of the fact that we are not a homogeneous delegation, but we possess, we will possess a great amount of tolerance within our group. We wish the same to the unified delegations as well. We are drawn together through having a common interest in tackling the social and economic crisis. [...]

In the case of most organizations of the third side the role of being the formal partner of the old power structure is a common burden. That is why a lot of people wanted our delegation to take seats on the side of the MSZMP. But they do not take into account the recent developments of our accelerating times, that is, the significant modifications that have happened in the structure of the sphere of power. [...]

It could determine the success of our roundtable if we refrain from questioning the legitimacy of each other, since the legitimacy of all of us is debatable. It is a question which belongs to the future – who will be given credit by history and who will be forgotten. On our part, we do not intend to apply such arguments during the negotiations and we accept that all of us are negotiating partners of full rights representing smaller or bigger segments of society. [...]

We are in the year of the creation of the constitutional state; reliable professional workshops are offering us to „buy” various significant draft bills, and the government is working hard, it does what it has to. We should also pick up speed, because the socio-political foundations of laws, that is, the political consensus is still missing. We have stated in our agreement that the work of legislation can not precede the political agreements. We agree with this and also suggest that the Parliament should only include in its agenda the draft bills made public already – such as the party law – *after* the agreements are completed. Instead of being governed by decree Hungary needs consensus law; the rule of law is the most important feature of the constitutional state. [...]

The third side agrees that two main topics should be included in our agendas, namely, the definition of principles and rules that support the execution of the democratic political transition, and the strategic tasks in tackling the economic and social crisis. It would be a misunderstanding of our role to pull a government-level economic and political strategy out of the hat. It can not be the goal of the opening full session; its goal is that we declare to the public our intention to cooperate and to negotiate. [...]

Document 36.

Third Conversation between Gorbachev and Chancellor Kohl, Bonn.
[Evaluation of the Changes in Eastern Europe].
June 14, 1989.



Third Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and FRG Chancellor Helmut Kohl
Bonn (one-on-one)
[Evaluation of the Changes in Eastern Europe]
June 14, 1989

[...] **Kohl.** We would like to see your visit, Mr. Gorbachev, as the end of the hostility between the Russians and the Germans, as the beginning of a period of genuinely friendly, good neighborly relations. You understand that these are the words supported by the will of all people, by the will of the people who greet you in the streets and the squares. As a Chancellor I am joining this expression of people's will with pleasure, and I am telling you once again that I like your policy, and I like you as a person.

Gorbachev. Thank you for such warm words. They are very touching. I will respond with reciprocity, and I will try not to disappoint you.

I would like to tell you the following with all sincerity. According to our information, there is a special group charged with the discrediting of *perestroika* and me personally that was created in the National Security Council of the United States. When Baker was in Moscow, we openly asked him about that. He and his colleagues were somewhat confused, but did not give us any clear answer, they were just trying to convince us that it was not so. However, I have some evidence that such group does, in fact, exist. I think, you understand me well, Mr. Federal Chancellor, you understand how I feel about it.

Kohl. Thank you for your openness. I heard nothing about such a group. Even if it does exist, I do not think it was created on George Bush's initiative, or that it was charged with the tasks that you have just formulated. Maybe if it exists, it has some kind of monitoring, but not subversive tasks. [...]

Kohl. I would appreciate it; seeing this to the end will strengthen your international prestige even more.

Now a couple of words about our common friends. I will tell you directly that Erich Honecker does concern me a lot. His wife has just made a statement in which she called on the GDR youth to take up arms, and defend the achievements of socialism from external enemies if necessary. It is clear that she implied that the socialist countries which implement reforms, stimulate democratic processes, follow their own original road, were the enemies. First of all she had Poland and Hungary in mind. This is certainly a strange statement.

Gorbachev. What are your relations with Poland like?

Kohl. The country is in a difficult situation right now. But we want to help it to get out of the crisis. As well as in the case with the GDR, we do not want any destabilization.

Tomorrow Francois Mitterand will travel to Poland. We agreed that France will be the first to extend aid to Poland, to give them financial assistance in the form of credits. Then George Bush will visit Poland. As for me, I consciously decided to be the third to visit Poland--after the French and the American. The Germans and the Poles are connected by something else. This year will mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of World War II. I will probably visit Poland on those dates. Anyway, I would like my visit to contribute to the improvement of relations between the Germans and the Poles, even

though I realize that it would be very very difficult.

Gorbachev. We need to support the Poles, they do not have anybody who has more authority and respect than Wojciech Jaruzelski now.

Kohl. We also plan to give Poland financial support. I understand your words, Mr. Gorbachev.

We have rather good relations with the Hungarians. However, we also do not want destabilization there. That is why when I meet with the Hungarians, I tell them: we consider the reforms that are underway in your country your internal affair, we are sympathetic. However, if you would like to hear our advice, we recommend that you do not accelerate too much, because you might lose control over your mechanism, and it will start to work to destroy itself.

In all the socialist countries we have the most hopeless relations with Romania. There is no movement at all, just complete darkness and stagnation. I do not understand Ceausescu. How does he not see what a ridiculous cult he created in his own country? I cannot believe that he can seriously think that he made the Romanians the happiest people on Earth.

Gorbachev. It is certainly strange that this kind of family clan would be established in the center of civilized Europe, in a state with rich historical traditions. I could imagine something like that to emerge somewhere else, like it has in Korea, but here, right next to us--it is such a primitive phenomenon.

Kohl. I like the Bulgarians. If you compare Bulgaria in the first post-war years and now--the progress is impressive--like day and night. Bulgarian representatives--leaders as well as simple professionals--often visit my country. They think and operate with very modern concepts, and they avidly absorb our economic experience. They also, as we can observe, implement it in their economic life quite effectively. I really like Todor Zhivkov. He has been in power for a very long time, I think, since 1956, when I was still taking final exams in high school. He is a very flexible politician. I met with him several times, and every time we met, he criticized those leaders of various branches of the Bulgarian economy who could not manage their responsibilities. It is curious that he speaks about it in such a way as if those individuals were not members of his own circle, and as if he did not give them any directives, just observed them from a distance.

I am mostly concerned by the situation in Yugoslavia. The economy there is choking, and nobody knows how to help it. We need to think about how to prevent the Balkans from becoming the source of destabilization.

I have already said that in our policy toward the Socialist countries, toward the Soviet Union, we are staying on the clear course of non-interference in their internal affairs. However, a policy of non-interference could be of two sorts. It is one thing to sit in a theater seat, to watch what is unfolding on the stage, and, when the play is almost over, to rise and say that we have foreseen all that happened, and that it could not have been otherwise. How smart we are.

[. . .]

Document 37.
Record of the Telephone Conversation
between Chancellor Kohl and President Bush.
June 15, 1989.



Telephone Conversation between Chancellor Kohl and President Bush
[On Gorbachev's Politics]
June 15, 1989

After the greeting *President Bush* remarked that General Secretary Gorbachev's visit to the Federal Republic of Germany apparently went well.

Chancellor Kohl affirmed this and reported on his impressions. Gorbachev was well and was also considerably more optimistic concerning his own position than during the Chancellor's visit to Moscow last October. After his election as president and the internal political reorganization, he had obviously won terrain. The Chancellor also spoke with Jakolev, who told him that this was the overall view in the Soviet Union. Concerning the developments in the Warsaw Pact, Gorbachev had made it clear that he was close to Jaruzelski. He hoped that the situation in Poland would develop well. This similarly applied to Hungary. His distance to Bucharest is great. The distance from the GDR was also clear. Gorbachev expressed his dismay over events in China. Furthermore, he expressed his interest in an early solution to the Middle East conflict with regards to Israel. He fears the effects of Iranian fundamentalism on the Soviet Union.

The Chancellor had spoken a long time with GS Gorbachev about President Bush. After several hours of conversation, the Chancellor's impression was that Gorbachev definitely hoped for a good relationship with Bush. He hoped that this may be more easily possible than with President Reagan. He was strongly supported in this view by Mrs. Gorbachev. She spoke kindly about Barbara, but avoided talking about other women. The Chancellor continued that it is his impression that Gorbachev wants to deepen personal contacts personally with Bush. He explained to Gorbachev that it was not possible to drive a wedge between the U.S. and the Federal Republic of Germany or to push the Europeans away from the U.S. This also applies to the relationship between him [Kohl] and President Bush. Gorbachev reacted almost violently to this observation; it was not his intention to separate the Federal Republic of Germany [from the West]. Neutralization would lead to destabilization. This would be a threat to the Soviet Union as well. Gorbachev also spoke positively about a talk with Jim Baker...¹

The Chancellor continued: he believed that if Bush were to accommodate Gorbachev a bit, it would open up a good possibility for discussion. The principled mistrust with regard to the U.S. is unmistakable. He was not acting in his [Gorbachev] desire to have good relations. Concerning arms control, the Chancellor was surprised that Gorbachev saw no insurmountable obstacle in the twelve months schedule. He said that it was possible to work faster. The INF treaty had been completed in only 12 months when they were really intent on concluding it. The Chancellor suggested that when the negotiations in Vienna were going well, President Bush might himself want to occasionally give direct reports to Gorbachev. This would be useful. It would also be a sign of growing trust between the U.S. and the SU.

For Gorbachev, a personal relationship of trust is very important. The "chemistry" had to be right.

¹ Sentence not released

Also interesting was Gorbachev's report on developments in Moscow. He had ruthlessly [*schonungslos*] reported on the crimes of Stalin. Gorbachev was determined to lay everything out in the open. In this context he had explicitly approved of what Hungary is now doing. The economic troubles of the Soviet Union were obvious. Gorbachev spoke openly about this and also stated that he had difficult years ahead of him. His message to the Germans was that the war is over, that there was another generation, and that in spite of the differences in the systems, one should support cooperation. He, the Chancellor, had never questioned that there had been differences of opinion in fundamental questions, namely, the question concerning the division of Germany and Berlin. It struck him that Gorbachev's reaction to the Chancellor's dinner address was considerably milder than it had been last October in Moscow.

In conclusion, he would like to say that he was very satisfied with the visit. Gorbachev knows where he, the Chancellor, stood on the issues and that it was good to respect this position. They had tried to come to an agreement that could be a reasonable basis for policy.

The Chancellor asked if President Bush had received a copy of his afterdinner speech at the dinner for Gorbachev.

President Bush answered in the affirmative. He was pleased with the speech. He thanked the Chancellor for the timely and detailed report. He had listened carefully. If, after detailed analysis, there were additional points, he would be pleased to hear from us.

The Chancellor expressed his wish to discuss the World Economic Summit in a future telephone conversation. It was agreed to telephone again at the end of next week.

President Bush informed him that he would take the initiative for the conversation.

The conversation lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Neuer

[Published in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik; Deutsche Einheit Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90*, Hanns Jürgen Küsters and Daniel Hofmann, eds. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag) 1998, document number 5, pp. 299-301]

Translated by
Catherine Nielsen
National Security Archive
The George Washington University

Document 38.
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
June 19, 1989.



Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

June 19, 1989

(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

Csaba Varga: Right. So this is not possible, because then we are not a serious partner. Let me tell you, the three levels are not bad at all, as you would think from the outside. We probably will not be able to avoid that the first level, the plenary session will be a mere formal, ceremonial event. We will announce the final decisions to the public in some form. There will be no room for a debate, for a bargain there, there will only be final results. Now if there are twelve or whatever working committees on a lower level, the people there must coordinate, on some level the various different issues have to be balanced, through bargains, which ... here we make concessions, there we don't. That's what the intermediate level is for, where the two state ministers represent MSZMP, not the government. So Nyers and Pozsgay represent MSZMP on this intermediate level, rather than the government. Even if the two are strongly related, they can not but represent their party, both politicians. So the intermediate level is important because it can be a kind of appeal process, a conciliatory phase involving political bargains. If we don't have something like this, we can never reach any decision or agreement. Now let's look at the six economic working teams. When we went there on Friday, we took – let me remind you here – six names for the six committees. Of these they finally accepted four, the first four that we have now here, what Bálint talked about.

Bálint Magyar: They accepted five, concerning four there is ... (*unintelligible words*)

Csaba Varga: Yes, and they extended the sixth point that we proposed. And they largely accepted what we had requested. And they asked us – at this Friday morning discussion – to accept the fifth committee in exchange. So it was a deal. What we have to decide on today is whether we should accept the deal offered by them, the one and a half offer as against our four and a half proposal. In principle Imre is right that these topics are not relevant now, and they should be discussed in another forum. But it is sure that the other two parties, especially the third one, will press these issues by all means. We well have to make an agreement there today, so we can not just raise it here as a matter of principle. Furthermore, if these 10-10 minute talks are held on Wednesdays, then it will not simply be a statement of intent in principle, but we will have to announce there the basic position of the Opposition Roundtable on these two sets of issues. That is, what we want to achieve in each of the two issues. Say, what sort of election law we want, when we want to have the elections, in what order. So we will have to indicate our specific intention in advance. So even this week on Wednesday, in these two 10 minute talks, the thing is not that we simply start negotiations, or what have you.

But they propose that we should clarify our position for the public. Now we can still evade this by saying it is too early to fix positions. But then the Wednesday meeting does not make sense, because the only thing we can do is that we attend it, Nyers or Szűrös say something, and that's it, we just stand up and leave. Now we have to consider it from our point of view – from the point of view of the Opposition Roundtable – what is more advantageous. What we could say to the public is that yes, we wanted to negotiate, and that's what we have accomplished. We have managed to fight out the twelve committees in such

and such issues. For such and such a reason. This is our position. This is how we want to proceed. This is our schedule.

Károly Vigh: It does not show that we have fought out these twelve points.

Csaba Varga: What we say in the speech is up to us. So we have to think it over whether we are going to need the one hour of publicity or not. And if we are, then what we are going to use it for.

Document 39.
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpt).
June 20, 1989.



Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

June 20, 1989

(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

László Bruszt: Well, I think it's not worth jeopardizing the unity of the Opposition Roundtable and the continuity of the negotiations by ... I am sorry (*László Sólyom: We must negotiate separately in the meantime ...*) Then we will wait. (*László Sólyom: But we are listening, it's just the shortage of time that ...*) I think it's not worth raising the stakes in such a sharp situation. I think it's worth giving it a try to find out how we could accept this position. The thing is this. We have agreed (*Imre Kónya: Let's hear him out.*) We have agreed that the two issues, the political and the economic questions will have a very different weight and a different role in the negotiations. We have to achieve an agreement in the political issues as soon as possible, as for the economic issues, we do not have to make an agreement by all means. The point is that on the one hand MSZMP insisted on having some economic issues on the table, and we found some other questions that are very important from a social point of view, but we would like to follow the example of the Polish roundtable talks in this matter. In other words, while we have to reach a consensus by all means in the political issues, our primary goal with respect to the economic questions is that they should be put on the agenda, and in the worst case, the contrary views should be made public in the agreement.

So what we have to avoid is that the lack of consensus in economic issues should result in postponing an agreement on the political issues, we could build in some guarantees to prevent this, and the other thing is that we should make it clear in advance that we do not strive to achieve an agreement on economic issues, partly because ... (*Károly Vigh: by all means*) By all means. Partly because the various different parties may have a different opinion concerning these issues. Partly because a good part of these issues will concern the new independent, free Parliament. So they will have to be resolved by the new Parliament.

So the economic issues must be split into three parts. As for the whole package of economic issues we have to say that we do not strive to achieve an agreement, the main goal is to negotiate. That is, that we have to talk about these issues. We could perhaps include these in the agenda of the committees, or on any other level, including some other stuff. Second, we have to prevent ... we have to prevent the Parliament from passing acts in the questions discussed by these four committees, that is, we have to prevent any irreversible changes from happening in real processes. Concerning the issue of ownership in the first place. And third, the third thing is that we have to discuss these social issues, and provide as much publicity as possible to it without striving to achieve an agreement. So this is why I say that in my view if you accept these points, then I think the stake of this debate is not that high that we should break the unity of the Opposition Roundtable on one hand and stop the ongoing talks on the other.

György Szabad: I want to reflect on it very briefly. On the one hand Imre Mécs said he used to have the opinion that we should not negotiate in economic issues. We held the view that – given the well-known reservations – we should restrict the negotiations to a minimum level. If we agree to conduct negotiations in five or six committees in all the present issues, that would result in a very broad scope of negotiations. By this we would

not be able to fix anything what has been spoiled before, we would simply compromise ourselves. How can we so naive as to suppose that we will be able to turn around the transformation law in the course of the talks in the summer or early fall so that they withdraw it and submit a new one? And the framework for all this is the already existing basis making it possible for them to commit all those dirty things that Bálint has talked about so dramatically.

The other thing. As far as I know after very thorough discussion we have quite recently accepted our opposition statement that Imre Kónya presented. It says that we want to establish the conditions for a political transition here, with the elections in the center. This is what the whole communiqué is all about that we accepted unanimously, and there is just one very cautions sentence – one single sentence in the whole statement – that we are not indifferent to economic, social and other issues. This is just a signal in this respect. Then now there is a full, elaborate economic plan for talks emerging suddenly here, a deeply articulated schedule for negotiations at least structurally similar to the political talks. Don't tell me that this is just the consequence of that single sentence. There is a new situation here. The other thing is, let me tell you now, that it is drawn out absolutely unnecessarily. Because the positions mentioned here – I'm sorry to say this – are repeated ten times by ten different people. Nothing new has been raised since the first two remarks. So we should now turn to the discussion of the proposals, and then, if needed, we can come back to these.

Document 40.
Plenary Session of the National Roundtable Negotiations.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
June 21, 1989.



Full Session of the National Roundtable Negotiations

June 21, 1989

(Minutes. Excerpts.)

Mátyás Szűrös, speaker of the Parliament: Ladies and Gentlemen, Honourable Negotiators! It is no exaggeration to say that last week the whole country watched closely the first full session of talks of the negotiating sides, the Opposition Roundtable, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, and the third side comprising various organizations and movements, and additional meetings of experts and the relevant news coverage of it all. [...]

The members of parliament are aware that the social and political background of their decisions can be provided – to a great extent – by the negotiations of the three sides. In the present situation we have no time to waste, but rush and the lack of reflection should not be our guiding principles either. Therefore when I ask You to set for yourselves the goal of successful and timely completion of these negotiations I agree with the people who point out that the accumulated tensions and problems of society are so complex that their solution does not only require a common effort, but also a lot of time and a lot of patience.

[...]

Imre Pozsgay: Mr Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen! As a representative of the MSZMP I am glad to see that as a result of the meetings of experts we can hold a full session now. We have the opportunity to prove at this session that it is our common intention to take further steps in dealing with our problems. [...]

As far as the roles in the creation of a democratic Hungary are concerned, let me inform the negotiating sides of the standpoint of the MSZMP in this issue.

We strive to develop a political structure in which the political will originates with the citizen; where the political will is executed by institutions built upon the genuine initiatives of the civil society. Thus, based on the European political culture and on the historical experience of the 20th century, the MSZMP is willing to accept the electoral system based on free elections as a form of the expression of the citizens' will – in fact, as a valid form – manifesting the citizens' will and intentions in the competition of parties. All consequences of this will be drawn in respect to the MSZMP's political practice so far, especially the one that has been declared in a statement of intention during the first session – that it would cease to exercise its monopolistic power derived from the interpenetration of the party state and the state-party, and it would participate in the political process to win votes of the citizens in the framework of political pluralism and constitutional institutions with a fair program focusing on the nation's interests and with a relevant staff policy. [...]

The common rules of action in this political structure can only be based on patience and mutual understanding, which means that the MSZMP does not intend to make its own ideology and political pursuits the overall program for the society through the application of force or other instruments of oppression, only through a successful electoral campaign. During the electoral struggles the MSZMP expects and hopes that it would be able to advertise its own social program and ideological

and political views just as freely as the rest of the parties and movements in society.
[...]

Concerning the existing draft bills we should reach a political agreement during our negotiations in advance, and then the government could introduce these bills in the Parliament in the spirit of our agreement, hoping that – as it has been mentioned by our Speaker – members of the Parliament do understand the ongoing political developments in the country, accept the agreement born at the negotiating table and give it the force of law.

[...]

György Szabad: ...Honoured Participants! In the declaration of the Opposition Roundtable on 13 June we have stated – and now hope together with Imre Pozsgay – that we think that the goal of the inter-party negotiations is the facilitation of a peaceful transition, the transition from the present power system based on one-party rule to a representational democracy functioning within the framework of the constitutional state to be created. Therefore, during the negotiations we aim first of all to arrive at an agreement to be enacted that could allow our representational democracy – the foundations of which were laid in 1848 – to be reborn in a modernized form, and to become the manifestation of the will of the people expressed in free elections.

Following the internal logic of the agenda but not the order of topics, as stated by our Speaker, Mátyás Szűrös, we suggest that we should first of all work out the new electoral system. We would like to propose that the draft bill to be worked out should guarantee that all voters could carefully ponder and then freely and secretly decide by whom or by which political force they would like to have their interests and political will represented. The new electoral system based on public consensus should also guarantee that all political parties and organizations that keep the basic principles of representational democracy unharmed and reject the forceful or fraudulent influencing of elections could appoint candidates under the same democratic conditions, and that they could fight for their election with lawful means under the same conditions. The draft bill should also ensure the democratic and clean management of elections, counting of votes, and announcing of the results.

Free elections also presuppose the need to amend the present Constitution as pointed out by Mátyás Szűrös. Among other things we think it is unavoidable to change the thesis of our present Constitution concerning one-party hegemony and legalize the functioning of party pluralism – as prescribed by the draft bill to be worked out in the framework of our negotiations.

It is important to note here that we also expect the new Parliament resulting from free elections to create the laws concerning the introduction of the institutions of the Presidency of the Republic and the Constitutional Court. It does not mean that we are not prepared to work out certain common basic principles during the present inter-party negotiations to help the new Parliament to be elected in its future legislative work concerning these issues as well – naturally, without doing anything final.

Third. Together with including party pluralism in the Constitution we also think it is necessary to regulate by law the founding of parties and the political, legal, and financial conditions of their functioning so that they could use the

opportunities provided by law for at least three months before the free elections. To ensure that all citizens and legal political organizations could freely exercise their rights until and during the elections, a relevant reform harmonizing with the extension of political rights should be brought about in the Penal Code and the regulations of criminal prosecution, including the abolishing of coercive action of police and the revision of present laws concerning offences. We are of the opinion that it is necessary to create a new information law in order to ensure that voters do not vote haphazardly, but rather for the representatives of their interests as they see them, as much protected from demagogic influences as possible. Therefore a further draft bill re-regulating the mass media as a whole should guarantee that all the political organizations running in the elections can use the opportunities presented by the press, the radio, and television through means and to an extent yet to be defined, and that neither of those organizations can abuse them. We would like to note here that it is necessary to extend the increased protection of personal rights to modern information systems in time.

Last but not least, in our opinion it is unavoidable – also in respect of ensuring that the elections to be held are free and democratic – to work out laws that would exclude the very possibility of the use of force in public life. This could be guaranteed by a detailed definition of the realm of authority of all organizations of force, especially that of the state security organization, by the introduction of a complete system of their constitutional control, and by the detachment of all armed bodies from the political sphere. We think it is necessary to reach an agreement concerning the issue of disbanding of Worker's Militia and other organizations of similar nature. In our opinion the Law Regulating the Carrying of Arms, the Codes of Service of Armed Bodies, and the Military Criminal Law need to be modified as well. [...]

The Opposition Roundtable is gladly taking notice that according to the statement of Imre Pozsgay, Minister of State, the government is ready to accept the inter-party agreement of June 9 in reference to the issue that, and I quote „during the negotiations the sides refrain from taking unilateral steps which would make it impossible to reach the goal of the negotiations”, that is, legislation can not precede political agreements.

[...]

Pál Iványi: Mr Speaker, Honoured Participants! It is the MSZMP's intention that during these negotiations an agreement should be reached regarding all vitally important national questions, an agreement based on the clear-cut expression of the pursuits of the participants. We believe that the economic crisis and the accumulation of social problems can turn into a destabilizing factor which could threaten the peaceful transition into the constitutional state based on democratic party pluralism. This is why we think it is essential to include issues of social politics in the topics covered during the negotiations.

The responsibility for the present situation lies with the MSZMP, and we do not intend to dilute that through the negotiations. But urgent measures that would serve our future and the responsibility we feel in regard to the fate of the nation require cooperation in carrying out our tasks. The MSZMP does have its own program concerning the reform of the political institutions, the creation of the democratic socialist constitutional state that would facilitate the assertion of the

people's will, but at the same time we think that the creation of a viable, mixed market economy which can integrate the processes of the world economy, can stop the decline of the living standards, and functions on the basis of the principle of rational decisions, is an equally important task. [...]

Our goal is the development of an efficiently functioning internal market, the development of market forces. We regard the market as the primary factor in the integration of the economy. We can only apply non-market mechanisms where the market proves to be socially inefficient. The intention of creating a market economy means the acceptance of the judgement of the market as a general guiding principle of the economy and requires state measures that are conforming to the market. But a market economy also has its unpleasant social consequences. Unemployment has appeared. We put the emphasis on full employment as much as possible, on the creation of jobs, and on re-training. Social guarantees and services need to be created for those who are temporarily unemployed. We would like to solve the problem of the protection of people who have got into an unfavorable situation through extending the guarantees of the social welfare institutions. [...]

What makes the situation extremely difficult politically is that we have to work simultaneously on the development of a coherent program of reforms and on the solution of an already acute economic and political crisis. In this situation it has become a fundamental question which income group will benefit from and which income group will lose on the economic breakthrough. [...] The problems in the economy are quite complicated and complex. We have to talk about them in an open, honest manner. We have to reach an agreement for the people, and not above the people's head.

[...]

Iván Pető: Mr Speaker, Honourable Participants! The original intention of the Opposition Roundtable was to deal with only the political conditions of peaceful transition in the framework of these negotiations. We wanted to avoid the economic issues not because we consider the present system viable or even curable with just a couple of corrections. On the contrary, we believe that this economic system is not able to function at all. [...]

In spite of knowing that, the Opposition Roundtable did not intend to talk about economic issues because, on the one hand, there are no guarantees that agreements are adhered to until the political guarantees – which are to be set up partly through our present negotiations – are not firmly in place, and on the other hand, the daily tasks of the government are difficult to separate from its strategic tasks concerning the economy. Moreover, members of the Opposition Roundtable do not aspire to hold government functions prior to the elections, and in lack of governmental powers we do not want to take on ourselves the responsibility for the consequences of the economic crisis. Nevertheless, the Opposition Roundtable has accepted that strategic issues of the economy would be raised during these negotiations. This was not merely a compromise to facilitate that the political negotiations indispensable for ensuring a peaceful transition should begin. We accepted it most importantly because we have seen that the MSZMP, or rather its government, has introduced and passed draft bills in Parliament that affect the institutions and the power relations of the economy, creating a fait accompli situation for the period after the democratic elections.

The essence of the bill passed at the last session of Parliament as part of the ownership reform is that proprietary rights over public property would be allowed to be distributed for free among heads of company councils and other top positions. These processes can not be controlled or influenced by those directly affected. The ownership structure resulting from this „reorganization” bill would solidify today’s monopolies and anti-market interpenetrations that prevent or distort competition, thus creating an obstacle to the development of a real capital market. Moreover, this bill makes it possible to transform positions, most of which have been acquired on a political basis, into economic power.

The legislative fervor of the government makes it necessary for the Opposition Roundtable to take part in preparing draft bills affecting the essential institutions of the economy and the ownership structure. What is at stake in the following months is: who would own the land, who would own the factory, and whether the new ownership structure is capable of generating income efficiently at all. However, it is only worth talking about these issues if our negotiations precede the government’s introducing draft bills in Parliament also in economic issues, in the area of economic legislation – as it was agreed last week and reinforced today by all sides around this table. [...]

The problem today is not the government’s failure to recognize that it is indispensable to transform ownership structures and the structure of the economy, to manage debts, curb inflation, and to moderate as far as possible the burdens of the economic crisis on the shoulders of the people, the problem is rather that the government – as a hostage of the MSZMP, of the state bureaucracy, and of interest groups in control of certain segments of the economy – is only capable of promoting the interests and intentions of the forces defining its scope of action. [...]

We do not and can not have any illusions. If we reach an agreement here with regard to the fundamental political questions, the results could be apparent in the immediate future, but through negotiations concerning economic issues we can only create the institutional framework that prevents collapse and further falling behind. As a result of political agreements and free elections we can win the present, whereas economic agreements can only secure our future.



Document 41.
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).
June 26, 1989.



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

June 26, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

Imre Pozsgay: ...We suggest that for the time being only the six working committees should work that have been made up earlier, although we know that other ideas and recommendations have been also raised during the discussion. Committees working on the political transition should return to this discussion at a later stage – but not too late. So our suggestion is that presently the six working committees that have been set up in advance should work only, and the minutes should include the description of their make-up and scope of authority. [...]

I suggest that we, that is, the three delegations, should not interfere with the agendas of the committees; they should put together their agendas themselves, and they should bring the fewest possible unsettled questions to us to make it easier for us to make the decisions. I believe the committees are on the expert level and are politically conscious enough to deal with a lot of issues themselves. It is only a wish – but I think it would be appreciated anyway if our committee received as few disputed issues as possible. [...]

There have also been agreements in advance concerning the question of publicity. We suggest, if accepted by the rest of the committees, that the publicity of the activities of this committee should be the same as it is today. The press can cover the meeting, but they should not participate in the negotiations. Each delegation can inform the press in its own perspective after the meeting on what happened during the meeting. In my opinion this method would be useful with respect to the need of undisturbed proceedings. This would not apply to the full session, of course, which would continue with open doors just as it has been going on so far.

[...]

László Sólyom: Thank you very much in the name of the Opposition Roundtable, and now we are pleased to begin with the negotiations.

I would like to make an additional proposal concerning the question of publicity. We basically agree that the present system should hold, that is, we should communicate with the press before and after the meetings, but there could be some very important decisions to make when we could alter from this system together and let the press in for the whole meeting. We suggest it should be decided in each case separately.

[...]

Csaba Óry: The Opposition Roundtable has elected a special committee on TV affairs concerning this issue to think about the publicity of our meetings and to begin talking about it with the television people. On the one hand, we would like to inform the public: we have started talks with the television, not intending to put any

pressure on them but rather with the purpose of ensuring the appropriate publicity for the whole thing. On the other hand, I have a couple of suggestions in connection with this. We should carefully think about the issue of publicity. It would be useful if the other side also told us their opinion concerning this issue. The coverage of the negotiations is one thing. We are of the opinion that, the representation of these talks on TV should receive due emphasis, in accordance with their historic significance. We thought it could be a talk show that would fit the structure of the activities of the various committees. It would not be a live coverage of the negotiations; we should rather go on with the discussions started. This is the first question.

Now the second question. During our negotiations so far we made it possible for the Black Box to document the events, and I suggest we should give them the same opportunity in the future as well. Of course they always deposit the tapes. The 'black box' is therefore at the disposal of the negotiating delegations, and not of the Black Box.

[...]

Imre Pozsgay: Concerning the issue of publicity I have the following statement and suggestion to make. I consider László Sólyom's suggestion acceptable. I think it is a method that would not disturb our work, but at the same time it would guarantee the necessary publicity and public control. I accept it in the name of the delegation of the MSZMP.

The other suggestion is that of Csaba Öry's. I think we should talk about it, that is, it should be included in the agenda of our committee. Of course nothing can prevent anyone to go to the leadership of the television, as he did, to talk about giving publicity according to their internal rules and in a way they has thought to be appropriate so far. But in order to avoid a certain regularity which would give an opportunity to anyone to do harms and unfair things to someone else's disadvantage – concerning this, we should reach an agreement.

[...]

István Huszár: May I raise a theoretical question? To be exact, we are having political conciliation talks here. We are not codifying anything and we do not talk about issues of state administration.

I fully agree with György Szabad that for this reason we should not discuss paragraphs of law here, we do not have to make decisions like that. It should be done in Parliament, or in the framework of a codification process, or within the state administration. We should reach a consensus in fundamental political questions. This is why I think it is important for us to discuss fundamental issues.

György Szabad: Excuse me, I would like to respond to that directly. Of course, there might be cases when the two things coincide.

István Huszár: Well, I do not argue with that.

László Sólyom: I am sorry to see that István Huszár misunderstands our negotiations. In fact it is part of the agreement that wherever it is possible, we attach

the text of law to the political agreement. And yes, our special committees do take over codification from Parliament. So we would provide complete texts of provisions of law which would then be introduced by the government in Parliament. We have agreed on this.

Péter Tölgyessy: If the agreement is fully respected by all sides, then it means we have to go right down to the level of paragraphs and items of paragraphs. I think in a constitutional state one of the key roles of Parliament and politics in general is to make decisions of depth to avoid having solutions „up in the air”.

László Sólyom: It is included in a signed agreement.

Magda Kósáné Kovács: We are aware of the agreement since we have signed it ourselves. But I think – and forgive me for interpreting here – what István Huszár meant to emphasize was that codification is professionals’ job. It is no good if we just meet and start... (*interruption from the Opposition Roundtable: „We agree:”*) All right, we do agree. So it is necessary to carefully prepare and provide the right circumstances for that professional activity.

