

Document 42.

From Conversation of Gorbachev with Mitterrand during a Private Dinner  
at the President's Apartment, Paris.

[On certain political personalities: Ceausescu, Zhivkov, Bush].

*July 5, 1989.*



**From the Conversation of M. S. Gorbachev and Francois Mitterand  
during the Private Dinner with R. M. Gorbacheva and D. Mitterand  
at the President's Apartment  
France, Paris  
July 5, 1989**

[...]Mitterand. So, you are going to Romania tomorrow. I appreciated the answer about Romania that you gave during your TV interview to the TV show "Antenne-2" and to the radio station "Europe-1" (The interview took place after the press conference at the Elysee Palace on July 5). But at the same time, we all understand that Romania is a real dictatorship. The only unclear moment is whose dictatorship is it--Ceausescu's himself or his wife's?

Gorbachev. Still, we should make a realistic assessment of the situation. Romania used to be a backward agrarian country, and now it is an industrialized developed state. The challenge is to complete the economic and social base that has been created with a fitting political establishment. For example, Romania has completely solved the housing problem. This is a big victory.

But Ceausescu is scared of democracy. By the way, he told me that the measures that we are now undertaking in the USSR in the framework of *perestroika*, he had already implemented in Romania 10 years ago.

Mitterand. He told you that? Romania, of course, could use a *perestroika*. I visited Romania several years ago. After that I never came back.

Gorbachev. Ceausescu probably "wrote out" a whole plan of actions for you.

Mitterand. Precisely. Since what year is he the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party?

Gorbachev. Since 1965.

Mitterand. Every power is seeking a way to find its place in history. Besides, and I have already quoted these words by Tacitus yesterday, "every man always reaches the limit of his own power." That is why democracy must have a mechanism of political balances.

Contrary to Ceausescu, who is cracking down, Todor Zhivkov is acting in a smarter, I would even say, more cunning, way. For how many years has he been in power?

Gorbachev. He has lead the Bulgarian Communist Party for 35 years now. I recall how I was at his meeting with students of the University of Sofia. They criticized him quite harshly, and he kept responding "They are right about everything."

Mitterand. 35 years!

Gorbacheva. And you thought that two presidential terms in France--14 years--is too long for you.

Mitterand. (Laughing). It is also long. Zhivkov is about eighty years old now.

**Gorbachev.** He is not in complete control of his legs, and facial muscles. When I see him, I remember Brezhnev. [...]

**Gorbachev.** We discussed with him, in particular, the difficulties of the political process in the United States, the situation, in which the President always has to keep Congress in mind, and therefore sometimes he has to act timidly, or not to respond to Soviet initiatives.

**Mitterand.** In the past, U.S. Presidents used to be the masters of the game. Roosevelt, and Truman made their own independent foreign policies. By impeaching Nixon, the Congress took its revenge. However, George Bush would make very moderate policy even without the congressional constraint because he is a conservative. Not all conservatives are alike. Bush, as a President, has a very big drawback--he lacks original thinking altogether.

**Gorbachev.** The question about the American internal political process interests me also in terms of building relations between the Parliament and the President. In Italy, for example, the complicated relations between various democratic institutions, lead sometimes to the incompleteness, to the disruption of political process. In our country we have to concentrate on the implementation of radical reforms. Therefore it is undesirable that the center's initiative was compromised by disorderly relations with regions, with other democratic institutions. We need to find some gold median here

[...] **Mitterand.** For a revolution you need a new class that could take power in its hands. The Decembrists were able to use a powerful popular burst of discontent, but they were not ready to take the power, and nothing came out of it.

**Gorbacheva.** There was a lot of violence during the French revolution. Names of such heroes as Robespierre, Danton, and Marat are associated with revolutionary terror.

I think that there is such a situation in the world now that when people want to change their regime, their government, it is not by the way of revolution any more.

**Gorbachev.** In Poland, for example, people want to avoid the repetition of the events of 1980 more than anything else. By the way, this is the reason why Jaruzelski's course for a dialogue with "Solidarity", Lech Walesa, and all of Poland's political forces is gaining a wide support among the Poles.

**Mitterand.** By employing the cruel methods, the leaders of the French revolution were able to unite the population against the foreign threat. They were very effective in this. Just as Stalin was in his time.

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

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya  
for The National Security Archive

Document 43.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts)  
*July 6, 1989.*



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
July 6, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Tibor Füzessy:** Right. Then I will tell you. The person of the president of the republic is strongly related to the institution of the president of the republic. I believe these days or months no one else than Imre Pozsgay can be counted as a likely person for the office of the president in the country. Should Pozsgay be elected president of the republic – either with or without our consent – this would have an effect, an impact on the general elections that could – very significantly – influence the final outcome of the elections. The issue of a “triumphal procession”, “going into heaven” has been mentioned several times here. I think if there were elections in this issue, then Pozsgay’s election as president of the republic would be unquestionable. This would have the consequence ... some additional effects which would greatly influence the outcome of the general elections. To put it bluntly, if a citizen votes yes in this issue, then the same citizen would have a hard time saying no – at the same, or approximately at the same time, with a difference of a few days or weeks – no to a policy, to the policy of a party represented by Pozsgay. For this very reason my view is that we should not raise difficulties in the issue of electing the president of the republic.

However, we should insist that there should be ample time, several months or half a year, between the election of the president and the parliamentary elections, and then this half a year would make it possible for all the parties to spell out their program and make it clear to the people at large. At the same time the election of Pozsgay as president would result in eliminating his chances to run any campaign for his party. That is to say, his position as president of the republic would make his office in the party incompatible. So this would exclude him from the election campaign. This would also make it possible to make the program of the various parties public safely and under relatively peaceful circumstances between the two elections, and the parliamentary elections could have real results. Thank you very much.

**László Kövér:** I believe, if I understood it properly what I have now heard, it means that we should help Pozsgay get the office of the president, as soon as possible, so that we could have enough time before the parliamentary elections to have the public forget all about this euphoria. Well, I have to tell you that I find this logic somewhat strange on the part of an opposition organization. This is my first problem. But after all, this is the personal business of everybody.

My second problem with this thing is that it is not at all the same what sort of office, what sort of institution and jurisdiction we are going to create for the president. This, I believe, can be done most appropriately by a newly elected Parliament with the necessary mandate to do so. Lots of ideas are floating around here about a semi-strong, semi-weak or weak and all sort of other versions of the institution of the president, thus about different types of presidency, and it is not hard to figure out the connection that some want to have Imre Pozsgay nominated for the office of the president because this way they can create a semi-strong or semi-weak, or what have you, kind of presidency, with the implicit thought that nobody would suppose that Imre Pozsgay would abuse this opportunity. I believe however, that it is not the suit of the president that should be tailored

to Imre Pozsgay's body, but rather that the president elected should take the seat of the president of the republic. Therefore I strongly object to creating the institution of the president before the parliamentary elections. And in this respect the two things are related, I believe.

[...]

**József Antall:** Since I was called upon to inform you about the position of the Hungarian Democratic Forum on this issue, I think we should now exclude Imre Pozsgay's person ... (*György Szabad: Right, right ... let's talk about the institution.*) I wouldn't consider it, regardless of the fact that at a later point it might be possible, but I believe a political decision, assessing the balance of forces, and I think that ... (*György Szabad: Situation...*) we would create a strange situation if the opposition decided now, supporting one person, so I simply feel, regardless of the fact, let me stress again, that maybe this is going to happen, in principle anything is possible.

But even in that case, I believe, the Opposition Roundtable should not be concerned with the issue whether we think Pozsgay is the right person or not Pozsgay. So I don't think this form of the discussion is appropriate, therefore I think it would not be in the personal interest of even Pozsgay that we should be concerned with it now. So I would suggest that a roundtable conference should not be concerned with personal issues in the first place. Because it is a matter of principle, a legal issue and we are commissioned to discuss institutions here and a framework for transition. When we are commissioned to find a person in inter-party negotiations whom several of us ... or not ... then we can discuss matters like this. If we want to, but this does not belong here. So I want to point it up, regardless of Pozsgay's person or anyone else. This does not belong here. So let's exclude it now.

Secondly I don't think it is appropriate to connect the examination of the system of institutions immediately with a person, as it emerged here when looking into the system of institutions. I know, I can even imagine, that it is obviously a republican Juan Carlos model, in this conception, in which I can see some political reality, that it is feasible, but again this does not belong here in this form. So let's try it, otherwise we go in a direction which is not our task.

The third thing is that regardless of anything else, the Roundtable has come to an agreement in that, and the committee of the Democratic Forum has approved of it, and now I'm presenting the position of the Democratic Forum – and every time when we present a personal position, I think it is absolutely important that everybody should add what the position of his organization is, or what is his personal opinion not yet confirmed by his organization. [...]

Following a discussion in the question of the president of the republic the presidency of the Democratic Forum has authorized us to state that we wouldn't find it appropriate to have the president elected before the parliamentary elections. So it matches the declaration of intent. The reason for this decision, which was passed by the committee, is that it would be a political advantage for the party – and it is not necessarily for Imre Pozsgay or anyone else – which can then say it was elected... Mitterand is elected President, that's obviously a pulling force, it is evident that Rocard would never have made it without Mitterand. So this is again a political question which has to be view from this angle.

The next question is what solution we can find. There were two different views. According to one only minimal changes are necessary in the 1949 constitution for the



transition. We also had a position in this respect that the institution of the office of the president should be involved in it. One view maintained that the institution of the Presidential Council should be kept for the time being, we should not touch it because it had already become quite weak. And the second, compromise proposal was accepted, and this is what we represent now here, which is based on the idea that the institution of the Presidential Council should be abolished, and it should be eliminated from the 49 constitution, and a provision should be included (*György Szabad: as a temporary provision...*), provisionally, which may otherwise harmonize with the future modification of the constitution that the jurisdiction of the president of the Presidential Council, by making it precise, circumscribing and weakening it, or perhaps making it compatible with the Parliament, but this is a separate question ... its provisional nature automatically determines that the rights of the president of the republic should be exercised by the speaker of the House. [...]

This thus means that we are not going to save, it would be not right for us to save and prolong the institution of the Presidential Council, and at the same time, in accordance with what I have said before we do not want to include the institution of the office of the president, and this is why we propose a solution that is compatible with the Hungarian traditions and the international parliamentary practice ... (*Imre Kónya: provisionally ...*) provisionally, which at the same time also means that concerning the institution of the office of the president we would also object to the office of the vice president as proposed by MSZMP, if this issue were discussed.



Document 44.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*July 6, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

July 6, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** ...Nevertheless I would like to state now that the Opposition Roundtable insists on complete adherence to the original agreement, which means that would-be participants can join any of the delegations, otherwise they can take the position of the observer. This is how we must operate at the full session, on committee meetings, and on meetings of the sub-committees. Thus, the Hungarian Economic Chamber and similar organizations can only be present at the full session as observers in the spirit of the original agreement which had included a clear-cut statement that observers can only participate in the full session.

[...]

**István Huszár:** I agree with delaying our decision on further participants. I don't think our mandate makes it possible for us to take sides concerning this issue, because, I presume, the Economic Chamber and SZÖVOSZ (the National Organization of Co-operatives) do not intend to discuss political issues only, but also issues of the economy that fall under another committee. We would also like to keep to the original agreement as much as possible. Of course we have to be careful not to offend civil organizations, we need to find a consensus. Our political discussions shall be exposed to the public gaze and civil organizations should feel that they are not left out of these negotiations.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** ...It has been proposed that our committee, that is, the political committee should initiate with the leadership of the Television and the Radio to start a regular program on TV and on the radio – in order to inform the public continuously – where the experts of all three sides could report what has come up in the working committees and set forth the standpoint of their delegations. Based on their consensus, the three sides agree with those competent at Hungarian Television and the Radio regarding the focus of each coverage, and these programs will be broadcast in prime time both on TV and on the radio. That has been the proposal.

I would like to add a rational, restrictive amendment to it, although the core of the report of the experts' committee is accepted by our side. In our opinion, we would be asking too much from the political bearing capacity of the Hungarian viewers if such a program was broadcast once a week, between 21:00 and 22:00 hours. We also think it is unnecessary to have a weekly broadcast, considering the political content of our work. [...] We would rather see a program on TV and on the radio after the sessions of the political committee, that is, when information is available for the public concerning actual issues that were discussed.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** On my part, and also for the Opposition Roundtable, it is acceptable to have that one-hour coverage following the sessions of the political committee, but I think, discussions of gripping subjects in certain sub-committees would also cry for the attention of the public. Let's not be inflexible in this respect.

[...]

**István Huszár:** ...The more publicity of our meeting is provided, the better. So I do agree that the television and the radio should devote time to it. I agree with Csaba Öry that it should only happen when we have something to say. How it can fit into the program flow should be decided by the programmers of television and radio, not by us. When we have something to say, we should show ourselves to the public.

I would appreciate it if we did not discriminate the activities of the second committee. We should be aware of the fact that the public is just as interested in economic and social issues as in political ones.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** A lot of people have said we wanted to make an agreement above the heads of the people. In these programs we should not announce agreements only. Some programs are also needed that would reflect the process of reaching the agreements, that is, the discussions themselves, so that the population would not feel that so far it has been one organization announcing things, and the only difference is that from now on there are three organizations doing so together. Therefore, the discussion itself should be represented – and the Opposition Roundtable is suggesting again that these programs should be mostly talk shows, not only the news.

**Imre Pozsgay:** I do not see any obstacles to that in principle, so let us quickly close this topic now. I have not sensed opposition to this kind of interpretation of publicity on any of the sides. [...] The debate has sprung up concerning the method of implementation. In this debate I am inclined to say again that these things should be handled with great flexibility, as and when needed. [...]

In the spirit of our original agreement – in so far as the publicity of the whole series of negotiations is concerned – the political committee and the economic committee provides information to the public through the press, which is present at the sessions in the first five minutes, and after the sessions the speakers of each delegation can make a statement to the press, to the radio, and to television, as they wish. The Opposition Roundtable requested at the previous meeting of our committee that all sides should agree that the Black Box could be video-recording at every level of the negotiations on the condition that the tapes are deposited with the Speaker of Parliament. Watching, publishing, program-editing, and copying of the tapes would only be possible with the consent of all three sides. The MSZMP considers the presence of the Black Box at all levels of the negotiations incompatible with our preliminary agreements. It should be the matter of further debate what intensity of their presence and what type of security measures would serve best the purpose of documentation, so I think it would be fair if those who initiated it elaborated their standpoint in connection with this issue.

[...]

**Magda Kósáné Kovács:** According to the original agreement the sessions of the working committees are closed and no unauthorized persons can participate in them. The persons who would be recording are unauthorized. We would like to suggest that we carefully consider whether it is worthwhile to discuss an issue like this, an issue that we do not regard as an important political or technical question and set a precedent like this.

**Imre Pozsgay:** Does it all refer to the level of the working committees as well?

**Magda Kósáné Kovács:** Yes, it does. The original agreement only referred to the full sessions, and I quote „The sides agree that they would like to make the full sessions open to observers”.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** I would like to make the following proposal. Concerning the presence of the Black Box and video recordings with the purpose of documentation we seem to be unable to reach an agreement today. I would like to request that the special committee concerned with the issues of publicity should include this question in its agenda insisting on what has been written down in the original agreement and in the spirit that the three negotiating sides do not intend to shut themselves off from the public either during the political negotiations or on the occasion of any other events.

[...]





Document 45.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*July 10, 1989.*



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
July 10, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Tibor Füzessy:** First I would like to comment on a rule of procedure. It was clearly determined at the June 28 meeting that three issues would be discussed by the Roundtable: specifying the date of the parliamentary elections, the method of elections and the need to elect the president of the republic. I accepted this proposal then because my opinion was that even the specification of the order of issues to be discussed has great significance. What happened however was that we raised the third issue at our last meeting, discussed it using much less time than the issue would have deserved, and much less than we have today devoted, one and a half hours, to several different questions. Therefore I explicitly propose that we should stick with this order, and take first the issue of the date of the elections, because logically this is the most important issue, and also because this is the question that has a definite effect on the other two. That is, the question for example how a party or an organization can present itself to the public, how it can spell out its principles is intimately related to the date of the elections. So we can not make a good decision on the question of individual electorates or regional lists without knowing how much time each party will have to present themselves and spell out their views. Therefore – but in the first place referring to our former decision – I suggest that first we should discuss the issue of the date of elections.

[...]

**József Torgyán:** I maximally agree with Tibor Füzessy's opinion, namely, that the date of the elections is decisive as to whether we get for regional lists or individual electorates, or the combination of the two, we should opt for. I hasten to add though that whatever date is decided by the Politburo, which they can later have accepted by the intermediary committee, the threat is still there as the sword of Damocles – that if we happen to agree on a date in spring, someone will stand up in the Parliament, you know, after we bring the election law to completion, and yet MSZMP is pressing the election law so hard for discussion that it is a quite likely possibility. So you see if anyone in the Parliament proposes that now that legislation has slipped out of the hands of the Parliament into the hands of the Opposition Roundtable, with respect to the future, if the Parliament can not perform any significant function any more, then it will dissolve itself, and whatever date you agree on, you know, the elections will have to be held much earlier than we would like it to happen.

Now, starting out from this dangerous situation, I stress, only because of this danger, the position of the Smallholder's Party is that in the present situation – after having weighed the advantages and the disadvantages of the individual electorates and the regional lists – but I stress again that only in this present situation – the only acceptable alternative for us is exclusively the regional lists. Why? You know, I can not agree with Péter Tölgyessy's argumentation that the elections based on regional lists brought disastrous result for France, you know France is in a special situation. As far as I know after 1944-45 France created the most democratic legislation system of the world in principle by making the laws regulating the constitutional process which were necessary

for the transition from a fascist dictatorship to a democratic state. You know, this solution was simply rejected by the French people, or the French General Assembly, or whoever it depended on. For this reason it is false, simply mistaken to refer to the French example in our own case.

What is really the point? Well, you know, the point is simply that for lack of the necessary infrastructure the different parties reorganizing their activities now do not have the possibility to publicize their candidates running on the different individual lists [sic!] in a proper way, or to find some popular people at all who can be run against the candidates favored by MSZMP for decades. For to show you how true this is, it is enough to refer to the person of the president, in which case the greatest problem of all the newly organized parties is that they can not find an appropriate candidate. So you know, when the press, the radio, the television is still not in our hands, when we still have a lag of several decades, when it is not we who can say who should be appointed to this or that position, then we can only be the loser in an individual race. Therefore in the present situation the only way for us is the regional lists that can take us, you know, into a democratic transition process.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** On behalf of MDF, I would like to reflect on everything said so far here. We do not want to stress the responsibility for the nation as a propagandistic turn, but rather the fact that it is in the interest of all of us that the will of the people should really be expressed here, and that we have to agree on a system that lifts all of us above the interests of any particular party and makes it possible for everyone to express their own will at the present moment, even if many will be obviously mistaken, not knowing what they are doing. This is one thing. So we definitely have to make a system that can integrate the advantages of the different alternatives and makes it possible that the mistakes balance each other.

The other thing is that it is clear from the discussion so far that there are two extreme position taking shape. It is obvious that we will have to make a compromise here at the table, for we can not go on, and we would like to submit a compromise proposal in the first place. That is, a system which comes closest to the German system, and it actually involves both extremes side by side, in a parallel fashion. The essence of it is that practically everyone has two votes. Once people vote in their individual electorate for an individual candidate, and concerning this we would support the two-round version, the advantages of what are obvious to everyone, I believe, and there would also be a party list in addition, in our proposal a regional county list, containing all the parties nicely side by side. The real possibility for discussion and a compromise is actually the percentage of individual candidates and party lists in the elections, that is, say 50% of the mandates should be won by individual candidates and 50% on the lists. This is the starting point in our proposal, which can then be changed by extending the individual mandates at the cost of the lists or vice versa. I believe this should be part of the consensus reached by the Roundtable.

Now, I would also like to say that in our view it is reasonable to decrease the number of electorates. For the Parliament is really too big for the country, and if we are really going to have professional representatives, then it would also be financially difficult to maintain a body of more than, I don't know, 300 members of Parliament. At the same time I put it up for consideration that the individual electorates should be adjusted to the size of the municipalities. An electorate of 60 thousand would really be too large for a

bigger village in the country to run a candidate, the different natural borders merge into one another there, so I think the optimal number should be found between 30 and 60 [thousand].

The other important thing is the issue of filters. I agree with SZDSZ that we must not allow that any boot-maker guild to constitute itself as a political party, for the new law will make it easier, anyone can be registered. Ten people can be registered as a party, which is right, but it would lead to a tragedy in the elections. So we have to have some sort of a filter, before and afterwards too. The filter afterwards is easy to find in the case of the lists, a certain percentage, either 5%, or if we do not want to be that strict now, then 3 %, this would be our proposal, though we do not object to the 5% either, so it could be the filter afterwards. And before the elections, yes I, or MDF thinks it necessary that some kind of nomination should be required – that is, collecting nomination signatures – for each party to be able to run candidates in the individual electorates. It is needed so that we should not have some small organizations to run candidates all over the country and then to be unable to fill the place, since it is a great risk that there might not be enough suitable people, somebody gets a lot of places by using a nice slogan and then there is nobody with the right character to fill the places. So there should be some sort of nomination beforehand. We would not even shrink from having a limit of 10 thousand, all over the country. It is a great responsibility to nominate 200 representatives, so I, we do not have any objections against 10 thousand.

In the case of the individual candidates, however, the official 600 suggested by the government is too high, for the people here have to show themselves, and in order for every party to get and run ... There, however, anyone can run. Anyone, any shoe-maker guild can run. So in order for them to run an individual candidate, who have their own individual face shown in the race against each other, the 600 is too much, 150 would be more than enough. Thank you very much for your attention, so this is our viewpoint.

As for the date, we have stated publicly earlier, MDF says if conditions are met, the elections can be held between November and March. We would urge to have the elections as soon as possible, for the situation in the country requires stabilization by early elections, so we would go to the polls in the end of November, if possible.



Document 46.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*July 17, 1989.*





## Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

July 17, 1989

(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**László Kövér:** I would like to add to what was said last that our sub-committee members' experience can confirm the same. MSZMP appears to follow a tactic whereby the experts of MSZMP constantly stress their lack of competence in the sub-committees and say they can not take a stand on this, and that it should be advanced to the intermediate level. We should ask them sooner or later ... we should now ask them at the next intermediate committee meeting why these sub-committees were needed at all, why double the work and then start it all over again. They should authorize their representatives in the sub-committees in order to make an agreement in certain questions. So we should not start the whole thing all over again, and I believe we should put them under pressure through publicity as well, for I think it is not a question of guessing ... (*György Szabad: what is the number of this sub-committee?*) This is our general experience, that everywhere they say they can not now take a stand on this or that issue, because they do not have the authorization, or because this or that question does not belong there, to the topic of the sub-committee, and so on, and so forth. Perhaps we should put them under pressure publicly too, stating how we see things. What they are doing is obstruction, they have opted a tactic to play for the time more and more.

[...]

**László Kövér:** I think I, or we, representatives of FIDESZ, can take the liberty to use harsher words here, all the more so because after all we are not a party in the classical sense of the word, not even in the sense MDF or SZDSZ is. Therefore I can afford the indulgence – for which I apologize immediately – to say that I do not consider the arguments valid and credible which use the interests of the country as a cover, interpreting them in various different ways to support their own conceptions. Let us be honest at least to ourselves. It is absolutely clear why the historical parties think they endorse the regional lists, and it is also obvious why other organizations believe this system is not suitable for them. So I think this is really what we should be talking about then. And it is also evident that we will have to reach some compromise on these two views which is acceptable by all of us, and which can also be represented at the trilateral forum. I could sense some false arguments here, in the material put forth by the Christian Democratic Party as well as in the comments made earlier here, saying that it is not the individual electorates and the lists that are in opposition here. So we should not pretend as if these were the two poles. The point is that the free democrats and MDF have some proposals for a hybrid system which could be a feasible compromise, I believe, we believe.

At the same time we also have to consider the fact that if a purely list-based system were represented at the trilateral talks, then this would most likely – in my opinion 99% – not be accepted there. So if we cannot reach a compromise here, then we will have to find one there, for I think this is the single issue among all the questions we discuss at these meetings that is the only vital and inescapable. This is the only important question on which we have to come to a decision at all costs, otherwise they will decide for us. No, I haven't finished yet. My opinion is that everybody should think it over that we have to

arrive at some compromise. Anyway, the trilateral ... So as I said last the three sides will have to come to some decision on this issue by all means, because this is the only really important issue.

The other thing is that it appears to me – strangely enough – that the dividing line is, unfortunately, not between the three parties, or between two, but rather within the Opposition Roundtable. Though the three parties can easily agree on nearly all the issues, since everybody thinks in terms of some combination of the individual electorates and the regional lists, there is a group in the Opposition Roundtable which is fully committed to a purely list-based system.

This is what I wanted to say as an introduction, that in my view it is an untenable position, and I believe we should all see that what we want to achieve here is a compromise of different interests rather than the fabrication of different ideologies as to what is and what is not good for the country. Because if this is what we want to discuss, then I would have several questions concerning the material presented by the Christian Democratic Party, namely what they mean by the will of the people within a county, or why they think the county list can express local preferences better than the individual electorate system. This is fully contradictory. I believe I was astonished to read that they make reference to the present political and behavioral culture of the Hungarian people. As if I was reading a MSZMP document one or one and a half years earlier. It also talks about a minority turned into a majority by manipulating the elections, but the same way I think we could have a different kind of manipulation which would turn a real minority into a majority by a list-based system. Are there really marked Christian democratic and social democratic trends? Is it true that people are likely to know what sort of principles they vote for, when the Baranyai fraction in the MSZDP argued against the meeting of the party scheduled to reelect its officials that young people should first learn what social democracy is all about before they start voting. I believe this ... it is a pity that they are not here now, and I have to say such things behind their back, but perhaps it is not that obvious that people vote for established, existing programs, when polls clearly show – also published in *Magyar Nemzet* – that people voted non-existent parties simply based on their names. So these arguments do not really make sense for me.

And finally I would like to bring up the most serious point which says that political fight – it has also been mentioned here in words – the main arena for political fight is shifted from open elections to bargaining behind closed doors. My question is: why is it shifted to bargaining behind closed doors this way more than with a list system which is based on coalitions? The clear, in principle clear programs that the parties present to their electors preserve nothing on earth in the course of coalition bargaining behind closed doors. So why is it a counter-argument against the individual electorates and why is it not an equally valid argument against the list system? I think after all I have presented all the substantial arguments – though I have not intended to – concerning this thing.

[...]

**József Torgyán:** If I may... the drastic cut on the number of representatives is unacceptable for the following reasons. Well, you know, at present all the appointive rights are exercised by MSZMP. Every significant post is filled by MSZMP members or people and organizations controlled by MSZMP. We, the opposition have only one chance to break into this system, and it is not the elimination of nomenclature, because they will say they agree to it, but then nothing will practically happen. The only chance is to send as many of our representatives to the Parliament as we can, and at a given place the

representative should have enough authority to be able to push other people into different posts there. Now if we cut the number of representative, then we will automatically enhance the chances of MSZMP.

Therefore we propose that we should not change the present number. If we decide to change it, then the only thing to do is to increase the number. The pay and benefits of the representatives is another issue, we fully agree that we should consider it very carefully, that it should not be excessive, something that would put an unbearable burden on the state budget, but if it comes to talking about saving money, then our opinion is that it is not the Parliament where we should spare money. Thank you.



Document 47.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*July 21, 1989.*



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
July 21, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Csaba Varga:** Dear representatives of the Opposition Roundtable! After the Monday meeting of the Opposition Roundtable the Hungarian People's Party discussed at length how these question should be resolved. Just because time is short an there are new agreements being formed we would like to present a proposal in six points to all the participating organizations [...] What are these six points?

First. We believe the Opposition Roundtable should present a package to the other two parties in the four most important questions – the date of the elections, the election tactics, the presidency and the election law – rather than negotiating with them separately on each issue. Thus we think the solution is good and possible only if... we should not get into negotiations in which we try to come to an agreement separately at the intermediate and the top levels, but we should submit a package to the other two sides.

Point two. We believe that in the last ten days or two weeks several circumstances have changed, both at home and abroad, which should be taken into consideration when we propose something to the other two parties. What new conditions do we have in mind? First, it seems that the foreign political situation is getting worse rather than better from the viewpoint of a change in the political model or system in Hungary. As a result of strikes and ethnic problems the situation in the Soviet Union is increasingly tense, and there is a real danger of the restoration of the old system there. Similarly, the inflexibility of the position taken by the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Rumania is not favorable to us either. There must be borne in mind when we decide what to offer to the Hungarian public in these four basic issues as a solution in the following days.

Second new condition. The economic situation is not improving at all, to the contrary, it is getting worse, and the social conditions are also getting worse for the country. From this it follows that there seems to be less guarantee for the situation in Hungary to stay peaceful in the coming half a year or three quarters of a year and no conflicts will arise. We would like to express our fears explicitly in this respect.

The third change in the circumstances is that it seems now that a significant counter-action has been launched in Hungary against the agreement between the three negotiating parties, not only against the Opposition Roundtable. I want to comment on one of them here, because it shocked all of us. The Budapest MSZMP members of the Parliament started arranging for a session of the House in September in which members of Parliament should resign and the House should be dissolved. This would mean, if they could pull it through in the coming one and a half months, that after the dissolution of the Parliament martial law would be enforced immediately. I think the goodwill delegation today should raise this issue as to what MSZMP knows about such a campaign launched by some of its members, because it seems quite dangerous. So we are mentioning these so that we can all see the sharpening of these new, or old problems, because we believe these must be taken into consideration when we decide on further steps.

The third point of our proposal. This concerns the date of the elections, one part of the package. The Hungarian People's Party, you may recall, has said before that we are authorized to support a date somewhere between December and March for the parliamentary elections. Earlier we tended to support the end of March. The People's Party

now believes that partly because of the problems mentioned before the Opposition Roundtable should propose to the other two parties to have the general elections at the beginning of December. December 10 or 11, Saturday or Sunday.

Second issue. The modification of the constitution, problems related to the office of the president. The Hungarian People's Party believes that its proposal presented here before ... (*Gábor Fodor: The fourth point?*) This is the fourth point, yes, I'm sorry. The fourth point. What we said, let me remind you, is that – contrary to the proposal made by MDF and SZDSZ – we propose to bridge this problem by setting up a new Presidential Council, for what would happen if the Parliament dissolves itself and calls the general elections, what should happen till the elections take place? This proposal is now withdrawn ... (*László Kónya: The presidency has withdrawn it.*) because we believe ... (*László Kónya: It has had it withdrawn*) it is so complicated, it would involve such a difficult solution which is simply not viable with the present inner state of the Parliament. Therefore we go back to the idea that in the transitional period the best solution is to have the office of the president. An office of the president with intermediate power.

Fifth point. The issue of election logistics and methods. There were two marked positions taking shape in the last session of the Opposition Roundtable last Monday. One was a purely national and county list-based system of elections, the other one was a compromise offered by MDF to the other parties involving a fifty-fifty percent of individual electorates and party lists. The People's Party believes that the compromise is inevitable. So we offer it as a compromise solution to have lists and individual electorates in a ration of three quarters to one quarter. One important argument for this solution is that the participating organizations should consider the fact that there are three thousand municipalities in Hungary. (*József Antall: What is the method? We don't understand until...*) Let me explain ... So one quarter should be individual electorates ... I will also explain that instantly. Let me tell you about the essence, which is extremely important for it. There are three thousand settlements in Hungary. If we think it over, the opposition parties can establish a local organization of their own at best in one thousand or one thousand and a few hundred places until the elections. In the rest of the places it is quite likely that we will have none. This means that we would hardly be able to organize the elections in the whole of the country, or even in half of the country in an individual electorate system.

How do we see the two possible combinations mentioned before? First we think what György Szakolczai said on Monday morning is basically right. Let me highlight a few things not mentioned in that proposal. Last time Jóska Torgyán indicated that we would like to have the residual votes in both the individual electorates and in the regional county lists to pass on to a national list. So no vote should be lost, because that would be fair to the small parties. The other thing is that we believe the parties should collect signatures, and the number here should be set at a limit of ten thousand, though the Hungarian People's Party believes the historical parties would not need anything like this, since they have been functioning continuously, but still, for the sake of unity we are willing to support it, as any other organization. So much about these issues.

An finally our last proposal is this. Number six. If the Opposition Roundtable accepts it that we should present a package concerning the four main issues, if it agrees to have the elections in December, the beginning of December, if it agrees that with a view to political guarantees we should still have the office of the president, and if it agrees to a division of three quarters list system and one quarter individual electorates, then, bearing all this in mind, we should count backwards and consider the timing of events. This means that in order to have the elections in December, we should have the Parliament call the



parliamentary elections in September, at the beginning of September. To this effect, however, we have to agree with all the three parties in August on every detail of the package. So we would like to propose for the next intermediate level meeting to be held on Tuesday, Wednesday, or whatever day, that the Opposition Roundtable should raise the issue of speeding up the process and try to urge the other party to come to an agreement on these issues in the middle of August.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Our opinion is that this is a proposal which is meant to discuss again a number of issues already decided. Our organization is not willing to re-negotiate these questions. What we would like to discuss first – without entering a debate – is whether the Opposition Roundtable is willing to put these things on its agenda as compared to what is already on it – only what concerns the election system – because we believe it is not right, and we will represent this position firmly. So the first question is whether we are going to discuss other things as well, or just the elections system. The definite position of the Alliance of Free Democrats is that we should only discuss what is on the agenda, the issues of the elections system. All the other questions should either be taken later – in accordance with our earlier decision – or they come under the decision of the Opposition Roundtable, and we strongly object to discussing them again now. Our organization maintains that if we don't go back to our original agenda, but we have to re-negotiate certain things, then we will have to withdraw from the Opposition Roundtable. Thank you.

[...]

**József Antall:** Just to Csaba Varga, I would like to have it closed. My proposal is that because it is such a cardinal issue, an issue of such importance, and his analysis that he has just presented involves so many things worth considering, and I believe we all feel that, even if not everybody ... the same conclusions, or come to them, but the fact that it is a real analysis that is worth some attention, and further things .. I ... it cannot, the representatives of the Roundtable cannot make a decision now in this question, so all the organizations should submit it to their own presidency – as has the People's Party – to their own presidency, this is what I propose, that all the participating organizations, regardless of what their response to it will be, it's another question, but they should investigate the question in a way it was raised by the People's Party, and we should come back to it later. (*Gábor Fodor: Right, thank you for the useful proposal...*) And let's leave it at that now.

**Gábor Fodor:** I support the proposal. Yes...

**Viktor Orbán:** I have a comment of one sentence regarding this motion. The way I interpret it is that out of the six proposals put forward by Csaba Varga one or two are of a modifying nature. So the People's Party requests the modification of a decision made earlier by the Opposition Roundtable, in my judgment. So I think this is the way it should be submitted to our organizations. So FIDESZ will present it in such a way that the People's Party wishes to modify such and such a decision made by the Opposition Roundtable in a such and such a sense. Period. This is the way I will submit it, or this is the way we will do it, I believe. And I want to call everybody's attention to it.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I would like to add two things here. In my view it is not a modification, but the proposal intends to re-negotiate and make a decision that is in sharp opposition – this is a more precise way to put it. And it has caught the parties unprepared. Personally, it was quite unexpected to me. We have to think it over what we should think even about putting this on the agenda. And it would have been better if we ... in advance ... The whole proposal is surprising, considering that I thought we would talk here about the election system, lists or individual electorates, and instead the issue of the presidency came back, which perhaps was not a good idea.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** I want to raise one single point. I believe we can expect from each other anything we would expect from MSZMP. If MSZMP were to say that all the agreements made so far that have not been approved of by Károly Grósz, that have not been signed by the top leaders of MSZMP, is re-negotiable, is re-interpretable – that's what we have here basically. But we can always go back to the starting point and negotiate all over again, that's what it would mean. Some progress has been made in all the sub-committees. If the representative of MSZMP said in the sub-committee that I am a member of, that we should go back to the starting point, then we would stand up and leave, I believe all the participating members of the Opposition Roundtable would uniformly do so. So this much can be expected.

If MSZMP proposed in one of the sub-committees to consider this or that question, then – as suggested by Gábor Fodor –we could go back to discussing it, but until a new agreement is reached, the old decision is in force. So I propose we should stick with the interpretation suggested by Gábor Fodor, that's what we expect from MSZMP, let's not provide a precedence for them – who are of course not present here – but still we should not provide a precedence for MSZMP that there is no completed agreement. So I agree with what has been said by Viktor, or Gábor that once we have agreed on something, until we re-discuss it and make a new decision, the old decision should be adhered to. And the same is true of the negotiations with MSZMP, obviously.

Document 48.  
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Executive Committee  
[On Speeding Up the Political Coordinating Negotiations].  
Excerpt.  
*July 24, 1989.*



**Meeting of the MSzMP Political Executive Committee<sup>i</sup>**  
**[On Speeding Up the Political Conciliatory Negotiations]**

July 24, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpt.)

**György Fejti:** We are in a complicated situation now, but still, we have to make up our minds. In many questions, especially when it comes to specific details, we have made quite a progress. However, in a series of fundamental and cardinal questions the antagonism seems irreconcilable; apparently the date of the general elections is one of these argumentative issues. So, with the flexible negotiating strategy, namely that we give in to certain demands but stand our ground firmly in other issues, we could not resolve the prevailing antagonism for the time being. Yet time is pushing us. Technically, we have some three or four weeks left to work out the legal conditions of the parliamentary elections of late autumn<sup>ii</sup>. Three or four weeks, that's all we have.

On the other hand, this more or less open, hesitant, obstructing behaviour is physically impeding the process of calling elections. That's why we have to come to decision, on the basis of the previous issue on the agenda, as to what to do in the face of the present economic situation and the international financial conditions. Because we either accept the fact that we cannot make a compromise in this case, while emphasising that the ongoing negotiation process should not be jeopardised – it is another question, though, that the danger does not only hold for the elections – or, alternatively, we come up with overt reasoning and publicise in due time what is the rationale behind advancing the date of elections. In the latter case we should look for compromises in other issues, instead of this one. We undoubtedly jeopardise the success of negotiations; what is more, we even risk their termination. The later we express our intention to call earlier elections, the bigger the danger is.

**Rezső Nyers:** The only reason to hasten negotiations is to have advance elections? I believe that even if called elections for the next spring, we should speed things up all the same, shouldn't we?

**György Fejti:** It is a markedly different situation if we want to submit the fundamental laws to parliament in mid-September rather than in December. The meaning of hastening things now depends on whether we show up the magnanimous gesture of government – abolishing these laws – in a very broad sense or the government makes it clear that, even though they are curious how political negotiations will end, they want to submit the bills at the next seating anyway, so that nothing can change the date of election.

**Rezső Nyers:** I have one question – otherwise I completely agree that we hasten the process and the government keep to their schedule, with the one compromise of September. But why does it have to be connected with elections in November?

**György Fejti:** Because we have no other plausible reason for speeding things up.

[...]

**György Fejti:** Yes, but we have to get back to the unfortunately irrevocable question, that we should decide in a very short time, to what extent the elections of this year are

important for us. Until there is no decision in this issue, we cannot follow a clear and unequivocal guideline in negotiations. We might lose this, which I can imagine, so let me point out that despite all appearances there is no covert reason that would make it important for me. Yet we cannot carry on the negotiations under such pressure without knowing how important this issue is for our own party.

**Rezső Nyers:** Comrade Fejti, it is very important for us. In one condition: if they pass these fundamental laws in September, then the November elections are 100 percent for our advantage. If they do not vote for the bill in September, then nothing is good enough for us. Absolutely nothing. This is the decisive factor. So, I am totally and immediately for the November elections, if these three issues are accepted. Or at least two of the tree. Three would be most expedient, though.

**György Fejti:** You mean that they accept it? It is still a bone of contention. There are and will be several disputable issues.

It is for sure that the documents can only be submitted in September with much controversy. This is part of the negotiation strategy. We shouldered responsibility for negotiating these bills. However, MSZMP cannot take the responsibility for striking a deal with those powers. We will not be able to come to terms; it is the Parliament's task to ask for a decision, with making known and objectively presenting the opposing views. In the present state of negotiations it is an illusion that in these questions – may it be the party law or election law – a total agreement and final consent can be reached. Illusion. Possibly we should reduce the number of points that induce confrontation – and there is a lot, at the moment. Just to mention one example: so far, when it came to the party law, the opposition have put it in the minutes at every single meeting that the MSZMP is not willing to give consent to proposing the bill to parliament if either the assessment or the redistribution of their total property is on the agenda. I think it is absolutely impossible that such a position would be acceptable for us right before the elections. I couldn't tell when they would take a U-turn in this issue. They will only relinquish if there is a final deadline, until which the negotiations should be completed, otherwise we can stand up, wash our hands and say that the agreement has fallen through but we are not the ones to blame. So that's why entirely clear statements are needed, saying that there is a set schedule and deadline for negotiations; the delegates of the MSZMP are unable to do this.

[...]

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<sup>i</sup> On 23-24 June, 1989 the MSZMP Central Committee established a 21 member Political Executive Committee replacing the former Political Committee.

<sup>ii</sup> The MSZMP considered early elections advantageous for themselves assuming that this way the parties of the opposition would have no sufficient time to publicise their programs. However, elections were held only in March, 1990 eventually.

Document 49.

Negotiation between Mihail S. Gorbachev and Rezső Nyers, President and  
Károly Grósz General Secretary of the MSZMP, Moscow.  
Report to the MSZMP Political Executive Committee. Excerpt.  
*July 24-25, 1989.*





**Negotiation between Mihail S. Gorbachev and Rezső Nyers, President and Károly Grósz General Secretary of the MSZMP, Moscow.**  
Report to the MSZMP Political Executive Committee.

24-25 July, 1989

Excerpt

Hungarian Socialist Workers Party  
Central Committee

TOP SECRET!  
Inf/1451/1989

REPORT  
to the Political Executive Committee

Invited by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist party, comrades Rezső Nyers and Károly Grósz visited the Soviet Union on 24 and 25 July 1989. They took part in a two-hour negotiation with comrade Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. The Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party invited the delegates for dinner, with the participation of several Soviet leaders. Comrades Nyers and Grósz negotiated with leaders of the Soviet-Hungarian Friendship Society. Comrade Nyers met Soviet social scientists; comrade Grósz met leading officials of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

I.

Comrade Nyers described the situation of Hungary and the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party. He said that the party is preparing for a working congress<sup>i</sup>. Decision has not been made in every issue yet but is quite definite that internal issues of the party will be on the agenda. A set task of the congress is to render the unity of the party. Comrade Nyers pointed out that the party is already getting spirited, new platforms are being formed. The basic concept of the congress is democratic socialism, self-government, parliamentary democracy, and economic democracy. Comrade Nyers emphasised that property reform is considered the primary element of reforms. We wish to democratise public property, indeed making it available for the public. We are considering a new system that utilises the available capital more efficiently. We are planning to increase the ratio of private capital in the economy, and the initiation of foreign capital.

Comrade Nyers mentioned the experiences of parliamentary by-elections<sup>ii</sup>. He emphasised that one should not jump to immediate conclusions from the results. We consider the elections neither a success nor a complete failure. The present state of paralysis within the party, however, has become apparent. He referred to the fact that in one constituency the opposition united their forces in the campaign against the MSZMP, but this is not expected as a general tendency when it comes to the general elections. Comrade Nyers stressed that there are three factors that can defeat the party. Firstly: the past, if we let ourselves smeared with it. Secondly: the disintegration of the party. The third factor that can defeat us is the paralysis of party membership.

Talking about Hungary, comrade Gorbachev said that Hungarian events are followed with much interest in the Soviet Union. The leadership of the Soviet Communist

Party refers to our policy with understanding. In the course of negotiations they understood our intention to find our way in the path of democratic socialism. At the same time, comrade Gorbachev posed several questions in relating to the situation of Hungary and the policy of the MSZMP. Among other things, he enquired about our orientation in foreign policy, the role of private property and foreign capital, the experiences of bye-elections, the goals of the party congress, and about the unity of the party. Comrade Gorbachev put special emphasis on the fact that Soviet leaders interpret the mass sympathy towards the MSZMP demonstrated at the funeral of János Kádár<sup>iii</sup> as an important political resource to rely on.

[...]

#### IV.

In the course of the visit, several issues of the bilateral relationships were discussed. Negotiators mutually agreed that we should widen the scope of relations between the MSZMP and the CPSU, and increase the exchange of experiences. In this way the recently aggravated laxity that has been hindering the co-operation of Soviet and Hungarian party organisations can be effectively eradicated. Hungarian negotiators suggested that the CPSU and other Soviet social organisations develop collaboration with Hungarian democratic organisations and newly forming parties as well<sup>iv</sup>.

The negotiations proved that it is our mutual intention to maintain the friendship of the Hungarian and Soviet nations, create a new basis for reinforcing the friendship movement, winning over the best professionals and the youth for the friendship of the two nations.

In the course of negotiations, Hungarian and Soviet leaders examined the most urgent issues regarding the stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary. Comrade Nyers reminded the negotiators that at the meeting between comrades Grósz and Gorbachev in Moscow in March, they agreed in principle that troops were continued to be withdrawn. At that time Soviet negotiators asked that this agreement should not be publicised. This time comrade Nyers suggested that the March agreement should be reinforced, the question of withdrawing Soviet troops further considered and publicised in one way or another. Speaking for the Soviet leadership, comrade Gorbachev agreed with the idea. His suggestion was that when dealing with the issue, one should start from what the Soviet press release says about the subject: "In the course of negotiations, the issue of Soviet troops stationed in Hungary was brought up, and the parties decided that steps will be made to further reduce the number of Soviet troops, in accordance with the European disarmament process and with the advance of the Vienna talks." Comrades Nyers and Grósz agreed with the suggestion.

In the course of negotiations we reassured our mutual political intent to seek the possibilities of establishing a new basis for Hungarian-Soviet economic co-operation. Comrade Nyers indicated that the Hungarian government is presently working on the new fiscal system, and possibly the propositions will be submitted this autumn.

The president of the MSZMP emphasised that the situation of Hungarian minorities in the Sub-Carpathian region is improving, which is of great importance for us in terms of home and foreign affairs alike. Comrade Gorbachev indicated that they are determined the head in this direction.

Another subject was raised: many Hungarian soldiers died in action on the Soviet front or in POW camps in World War 2. Hungarian public opinion is exerting pressure so that the memory of these victims is preserved in due fashion. Comrade Gorbachev

emphasised that the Soviet Union is ready to co-operate in this field as well. They said that mass graves on battlefields are virtually impossible to find now. However, they are ready to specify those cemeteries where Hungarian prisoners of war were buried. They would preserve the tombs, memorial monuments could be installed, and Hungarian citizens could visit these sites. The same practice is working well with the Federal Republic of Germany.

[...]

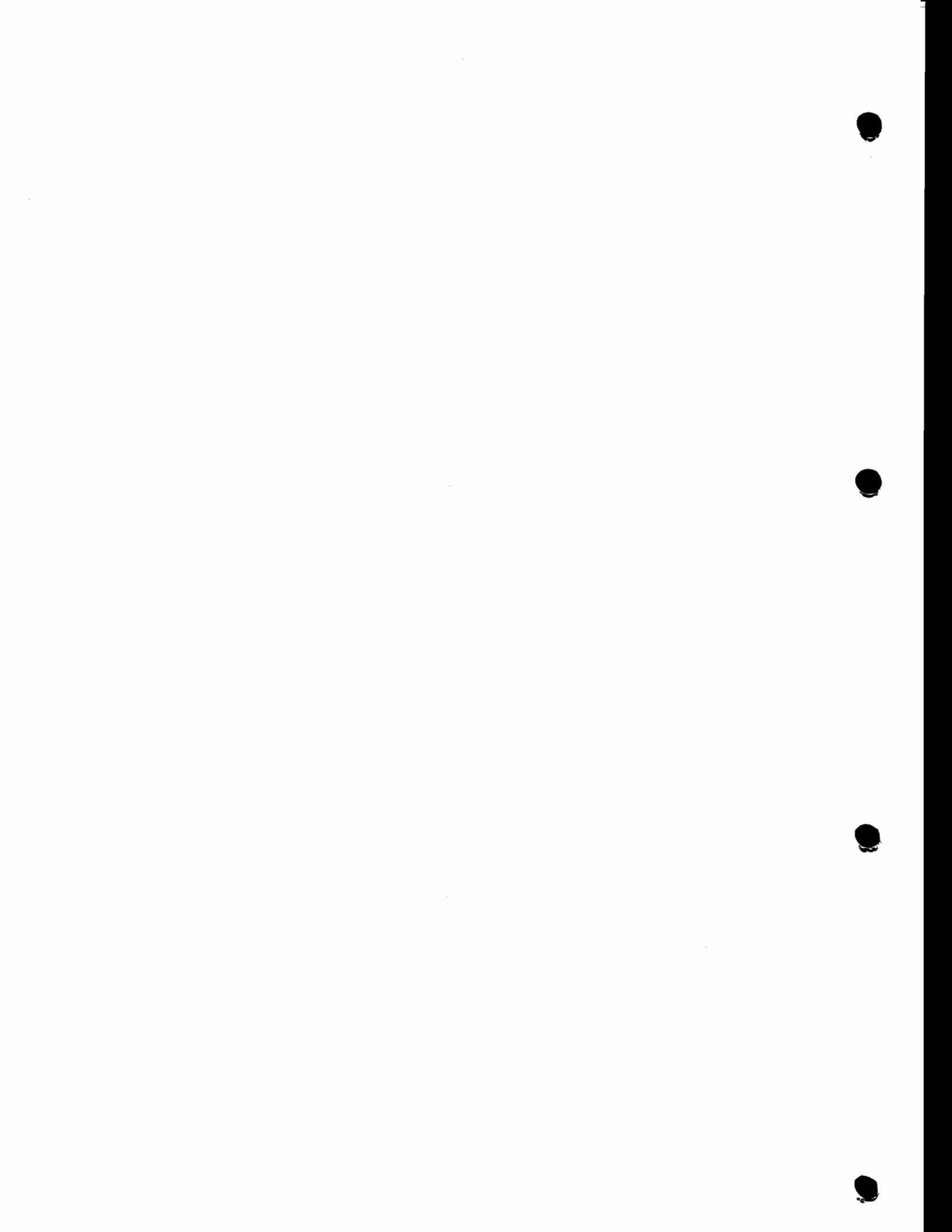
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<sup>i</sup> The 14th congress of the MSZMP was held on 6-10 October, 1989. During the congress the party dissolved itself and on 7 October a new party, the Hungarian Socialist Party was formed.

<sup>ii</sup> On 22 July, 1989 parliamentary by-elections were held in four constituencies but the first round brought a final result only in one of them, where the parties of the opposition formed a coalition and won. The second round of the elections were held on 5 August when candidates of the Hungarian Democratic Forum acquired two of the seats while in one constituency the election was void.

<sup>iii</sup> The ageing János Kádár, since the party conference in May, 1988 having the honorary title: president of the party died on 6 July; his funeral was held on 14 July, 1989 with the participation of several tens of thousand people.

<sup>iv</sup> It is more than interesting that just a few days after the return of the two MSZMP leaders from Moscow, on 27 July József Antall, representative of the Hungarian Democratic Forum made a proposal at the meeting of the Opposition Roundtable to invite the Soviet Ambassador in Budapest and inform him about the ideas of the opposition. This move strengthens the probability of secret communications having existed between the MSZMP and some representatives of the opposition as it was commonly believed (but never proved) at the time.



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
July 25, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** I believe there is a real danger of breaking up threatening the Opposition Roundtable, but I think the strongest attack on it does not come from our voters, I think we can find a solution to it. More alarming is the debate we had last time, namely the financial questions and the issue of the president, I think the threat of a split comes from this direction rather than that other one. (*József Antall: I meant this to cover that as well.*) I think we can bridge this – the one we have today – and I wanted to have the floor because I believe I can use our own example to present another way of thinking, another approach to the problem.

It is absolutely clear to all of us that if FIDESZ runs in the elections, for us, our interest as an organization is in the pure list system of elections. In an individual electorate system, with an age limit of 35 years, it is obviously very difficult to send a young person to the Parliament, considering the political culture we have now in Hungary. I think everybody can admit it. So our interests as an organization push us towards opting explicitly for a pure list system. But based just on the considerations put forward by József Antall, among others, I think it would be a grave mistake, for the whole of the Hungarian society, if the next parliamentary elections were based purely on regional lists. Therefore we do not endorse this option. Quite the contrary. We say our position is largely what is supported by MDF, and we say that because of the independent candidates we must have individual electorates in addition to the lists.

Secondly, in our view it is very important to be committed to a place, that a candidate's commitment to a particular place should be appreciated. It is another matter of principle debated between us that I don't want to bring in here now, which system is the best in a well-established civil democracy. I don't believe it would be a purely list-based system, but it is another matter. It doesn't matter now, I'm just saying I don't agree with what you have said, just to appreciate the present situation. So FIDESZ is willing to subordinate its own interest to the interest of what we see as that of the Hungarian society, that is, that we should have a combined system. We endorse this alternative on our part. It is a matter of further discussion then what the ratio of representatives should be, say whether the 50-50% ratio would be tenable.

At the cost of our own interests I would also add that it would be even better if more individual representatives could get a seat, but this is a trifle which we can discuss later, when we have reach a consensus in the major issue. So on our part we are willing to subordinate our own interest to that of the nation and say that starting out from the evaluation of the present situation presented József Antall we cannot accept anything else but a combined system.

**József Antall:** May I? It is only in a well-functioning democracy that it is all the same which system we have.

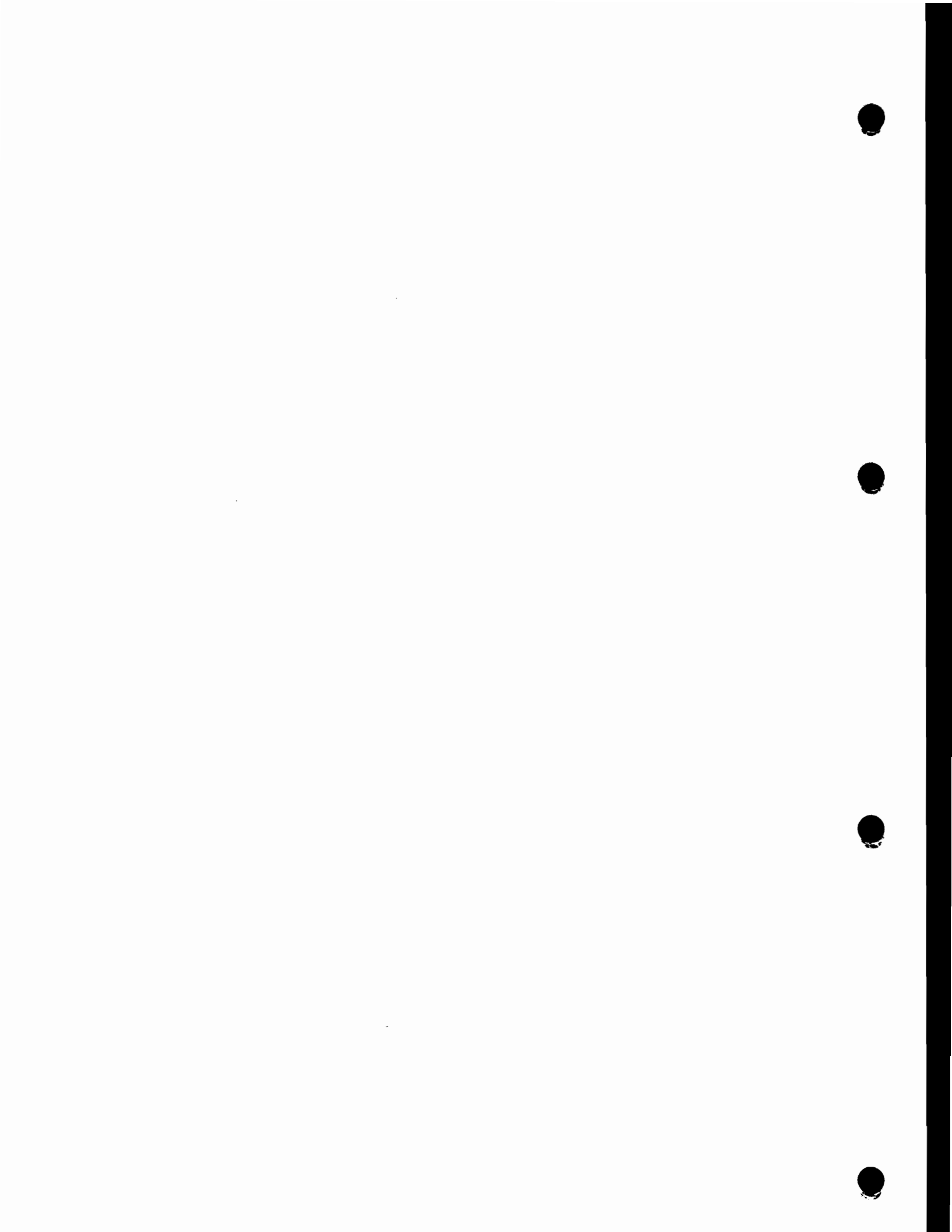
**Péter Tölgyessy:** It is not all the same. (*Disagreement, noise*)

**Imre Mécs:** Let's try to concentrate on József Antall's words, or I would like to forward a comment made by György Szabad to the rank of consensus. He said we wanted to work out a bill for one single election.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Excuse me, I have to comment on this. Historical facts show us that it just does not work. Generally it involves everything. If we were to decide now to have a Parliament with 400 representatives, then it is absolutely impossible for the next Parliament to decrease this number, because the point is very simply that ... Let's stick with this nominal party, The Hungarian National Democratic Party, which has, say, 100 seats in the House, and then some wise guy comes forward and says it should be cut down to 50, because the country is poor and it can not maintain so many representatives. The party will continue to stick with the 100 seats. So both the elections system and ... will become inflexible. So the experience of Western democracies show us that once they are established, as they were after the Second World War, and an election system is approved, and a number is established for the parliamentary seats, then it remains to be so for 40-50 years. Until a major shock is inflicted on the country, it remains the same.

So considering the proposal that first we establish a provisional system, which is then changed by the next Parliament – it is just naive. This election system will underlie a party structure which should then decide to change for another system, but it would want to stay as it is, so the easiest decision to make will be to say that everything should stay as we think it should be. So it is quite unacceptable to me to say that we make a provisional law, work out a provisional number of seats for the Parliament. I want to request the chairman to put the question to the participants whether they agree on a combined system.

Document 51.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*July 27, 1989.*





## Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

July 27, 1989

(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Iván Pető:** [...] in the course of the technical preparations the delegation of MSZMP proposed to put three topics on the agenda, the ones which got stuck in the first three committees. We suggested that it was too large a bite for an afternoon discussion, so we should cut down on the range of topics to be discussed. We could not agree upon it. Starting out from this practical consideration they accepted our proposal that the order of topics should not be equivalent to the numbering of the committees, thus we should not take the constitution first, because it is too large a bite, but rather first we should take the topic of Committee No 2 concerning the management and operation of the parties, then the issues of the general elections, and finally as a third topic the constitution. Now the reason why it was worth telling them about it was that after MSZMP had agreed to it, it was obvious that the position of yesterday – which is in front of all of us now – was not known by MSZMP then. This is a much more complicated matter, a much tougher task than arguing about the question of the constitution. They presumably would not have accepted it as the first topic for discussion.

I don't wish to give an account of the content of this thing, that is, the content of the debate on financing the parties. It is quite obvious in the documents, I simply want to make it even more straightforward that so far MSZMP has taken the viewpoint that the financial matters of the transition and the issue of the division of party property should not be discussed in this committee – that is in Committee I/2 – but they have not questioned the need for negotiation. Until yesterday it appeared as if the only task of the Politburo meeting this afternoon were to decide in this matter without discussing any substantial questions as to which committee should discuss this issue, in a sub-committee linked to Committee 2, or in this committee by replacing some of its members. It turns out from the documents that there has been a sharp turn in the position of MSZMP. They are simply not willing to talk about this topic, and I would like to say a few words about the background of this problem.

Yesterday it became evident, and perhaps those who ... the representatives of the organizations who were present at the meeting of Committee I/2 and informed their fellow members, so it turned out to be a sudden and unexpected change. The delegates of MSZMP explicitly said that even their representatives participating at the meeting this afternoon did not know this position yet, it is so recent. We asked them if anything had happened in the past two days which could be traced back in the newspapers and related to this abrupt turn. We did not conceal at all that what we had in mind was the talks in Moscow. They explicitly stated that nothing had happened. Nothing had happened that should have lead to such a change. In other words, they made it more or less clear that it was the private opinion of the leader of their delegation, György Fejti, if you like. Now it's all the same whether if it's a private opinion, it is a position taken within the party. That is, without making a big deal out of it, I had the impression there – which was further strengthened by the delegation of MSZMP – that it was some kind of a putsch. A putsch by one wing of the party who would like to achieve something, or who want to stop something. So we propose to formulate our position with a view to this development. The position of the committee can be read in the document. Let me say again that it is most

likely not the position taken by the whole of MSZMP but only by one line of it within the party which goes right into the opposite direction with respect to what is represented by the negotiating delegation.

**József Antall:** Just briefly, could you repeat in one sentence ... not all the participants, with a view to some future comments.

**Iván Pető:** You mean the content of it?

**József Antall:** The content of it.

**Iván Pető:** So the way we started it – that is, Committee I/2 –, the Opposition Roundtable started the negotiations sometime at the end of June with the aim to discuss the bill concerning the financing and the management of the parties, and it was given green light with the provision that we can endorse the bill only if we can also agree on the financial issues of the transitional period and the division of party property. These were our preconditions. MSZMP has never rejected this proposal, but they always questioned the site of the talks, which committee should be concerned with the negotiations. So MSZMP showed some willingness – this is laid down on paper in the minutes of the meetings – to reveal its own financial situation and the range of properties it owns. In other words, they were ready to give us a detailed inventory of properties and a financial balance. The organizations sitting on the Third Side were also willing to do the same, except for the National Council of Trade Unions.

The sudden turn here is that in its note of yesterday MSZMP said they did not have to give an account to anyone else but to their members. If they decide to do so, they say, they might give some immovable properties back to the society, or to certain organizations under the heading “slenderization” – that’s how they call it – but no one from the outside should have a word on this. Now we took the view – this also belong here, though I’m just repeating myself – that the transition to a multiparty system should not incur extra costs for the society, so we should be able to manage our organizations using the already existing subsidies and immovable properties, and we should cut down on the budget of MSZMP and the other social organizations and give this money to the newly established organizations. Yesterday we said – and this is what is contained in our records – that the new position taken by MSZMP makes it impossible, or in their view further burdens should be placed on the shoulders of the society and separate sources should be found to cover the expenses of the political parties rather than those which are already available for financing the party and other social organizations.

I believe that’s the essence of it. This is just an impression, but it was quite evident that one of the members of the MSZMP delegation – it consists of two members – apparently learned about this new position right at the scene of the talks. This sheds completely new light on his work and also on that of their committee. It was essentially a quite successful committee, the bill on the management and financing of political parties was just round the corner, there are only one or two gaps in it, but with this turn yesterday practically the whole thing has lost its sense, for we – that is, the committee – are no longer willing to negotiate until something happens. These are the facts...

[...]

Document 52.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*July 27, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

July 27, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**György Szabad:** Honoured members of the committee! The Opposition Roundtable has decided to make a statement on its session today, on July 27 and I would like to read it out now on their request. „The organizations of the Opposition Roundtable are deeply worried about certain press releases detailing the alleged initiative of MSZMP members of Parliament that the Parliament should dissolve itself after the opening of its Autumn term. The organizations of the Opposition Roundtable would like to remind all those concerned that according to the inter-party agreement signed on June 10, 1989, the validation of the agreement hopefully reached through the political conciliation negotiations presupposes the enactment of bills of law with an identical content in Parliament. Therefore the dissolution of Parliament prior to reaching an inter-party agreement would prevent the realization of efforts aimed at the foundation of the democratic constitutional state.”

**Sándor Keresztes:** Would anyone like to express his reaction to the statement just read out?

**György Fejti:** I suggest we should make it clear if it was a procedural motion or not and what we should do with this statement which we heard for the first time and have not received in writing. I think that in connection with topic I/1. it has been worthwhile to discuss possible questions of time schedule. There has been an opportunity to discuss the statement, but we would like to get it in writing and in the future please give us a chance to ponder our response carefully.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** ...Coming back to the first item in the original agenda which I suggested to be covered last, that is, the questions of financing during the transitional period – the documents are known to everyone concerning the shift of the standpoint of the MSZMP that occurred yesterday. We have written down our position on this. It has been unusual so far during our negotiations for the sides to change their views on short notice. Concerning the content, in the opinion of the Opposition Roundtable it is extremely problematic that after the talks have been stalled on the medium-level the activities of expert committees would still continue and so the standpoint of the delegation of the MSZMP is that the medium-level committee has nothing to make decisions on, quits in ultimatum-style, and does not say it would further support the constructive cooperation. We agree with the position of the Third Side written down yesterday. The Opposition Roundtable thinks that this shift of position – both its style and content – threatens the possible consensus, thus, we suggest that the MSZMP should modify its categorical statement written down yesterday.

**Sándor Keresztes:** Would the Third Side like to add anything to that?

**Nándor Bugár:** The Third Side met yesterday for a discussion and looked into the activities of working committee I/2. We can interpret and accept as part of today's agenda the topic of relations between the parties and workplaces and the question raised in connection with the deadline as follows:

The position of the Third Side is that it is unreasonable and impossible to apply an administrative method in taking apart the party cells. We fully agree that professional and productive activities should be separated from political activities at the workplace, but I would leave it to the parties themselves to work out in what way they would be connected to the workplaces in the future.

**György Fejti:** To begin with, the authorization of the working committee I/2., as prescribed in the agreement signed by all three sides, covers the following: legislative regulation of the functioning of political parties. So this is our common task to accomplish. Of course there is room for discussion of interpretations, and we do have to interpret the conditions of the activities. In this respect we have shown both at the last session of the medium-level committee and during the meetings of expert committees our willingness to create a separate workgroup aside working committee I/2., in order to work out the conditions of functioning in the transition period, and our willingness is still unflinching. Later I would like to outline our proposal in detail concerning the tasks and authority of this workgroup.

Staying with the introduction, I am glad to see the work done so far and I am glad to realize that the bill as a whole has been discussed for the most part. There are still some open questions, but it has been constructive work. That is partly why yesterday's developments caught us unaware, namely the fact that one of the sides deemed it necessary to halt the work. I do not think I am authorized to make a value judgement of this step, but I do not regard it as a particularly friendly one.

I would like to outline our opinion with respect to the so-called property issue. If, in accordance with the general international practice which I am unclear about, the registration of any political party requires the filing of a statement of assets, then the MSZMP is more than willing to fulfil this obligation, naturally along with the rest of the organizations. But it would like to file it to the court and in a manner defined by the bill under preparation. Therefore I would like to suggest that the Committee gives further authorization today to working committee I/2., so that it would provide information to us about the internationally accepted general rules of asset registration and asset statement, and if this is so, I would like to emphasize that the MSZMP will provide the court having jurisdiction over registration with the necessary information. That was the first part of what I have to say. Now, the second part. In our view the present financial condition of the MSZMP and a possible re-distribution of its assets are not included in the agenda of any forum of this series of trilateral negotiations. For this to happen, an extremely flexible interpretation would be needed of the text I quoted word for word. In this respect our position is nothing new. To the extent I could read through the minutes of meetings of working committee I/2., I think our position is impossible to misunderstand. We do not consider any forum of the trilateral negotiations authorized to ask a statement of assets from us, or especially to make decisions concerning its re-distribution in any way. I would like to explain why we have taken this position.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** I would like to tell you what our impressions are, that is, being aware of the content of the minutes of the meetings of working committee I/2., what misunderstanding we could recognize. What has happened, obviously, is that in connection with the two topics we had considered at the beginning, which were relatively easy to get over and done with, a significant retreat occurred compared to the agreement achieved in the working committee.

As I have mentioned briefly at the beginning, the three sides have reached a consensus in significant issues and now it seems that in these significant issues both the MSZMP and the third negotiating side have taken a step back relative to the positions they had taken in the Committee and in the working committee. During the negotiations we have developed a position concerning public service, and working committee I/2. has reached the stage, as I said at the beginning, where it has identified item by item from which circles of public service it intends to exclude parties (the wording is slightly unsophisticated).

The same is true of parties at the workplace. I have quoted what we all agreed on in this respect, and compared to that, what we could hear from the MSZMP and the third side is obviously a step back – and this is not a subjective judgement. [...]

In the working committee it was raised of course that it is not a simple task to do away with traditions of forty years, but the delegation of the MSZMP did accept the observation of the Opposition Roundtable that it is not fair that during the free elections one of the political parties should have cells at the workplace while the rest of the parties would not. This is especially problematic, since concerning these two topics a very significant step back has occurred considering what has been said here.

The delegation had nothing against the formation of a subcommittee which would negotiate through experts, but it is not inconsequential for the Opposition Roundtable at all, on what basis the expert committee starts its activities.

For the Opposition Roundtable it is an unacceptable position that the HSPW is not obliged to account for its financial situation to the society. Our standpoint is that it is not worth examining whether the MSZMP acquired its assets and properties legally and we have not raised the issue of the source of their assets. Our standpoint has been – and still is – that just as forty years ago nationalization was carried out in the name of social justice, accounting for the assets now can be carried out in the same way, and it is a necessary condition of switching to party pluralism (and I repeat, in the name of social justice) that the rest of the political parties should be informed about and should share the assets controlled by the MSZMP – a significant part of which is state property, at least formally. [...]

The position of the Opposition Roundtable has been so far – and I think it has not changed – that when we talk about the provision of the necessary financial conditions of the functioning of parties, it is also necessary to deal with the assets of social institutions and of the MSZMP, since – as we have written down and voiced it all along – we can only imagine the provision of necessary conditions of the functioning of parties if it does not result in additional burdens for the society within the sphere of provision of assets and state grants. If state organs and the MSZMP do not take part in this, no extra budgetary burdens can be placed on the population – it is contradictory to our position we have held right from the beginning.

[...]

**György Fejti:** [...] I would like to emphasize again that we have no objections to stating our assets. We only object to sitting down and accounting for our financial position if it does not happen in a framework set by law, but rather as it is dictated by someone else. In respect of that we have political and legal objections. We do not see a close connection between the financial situation of the MSZMP and the financial conditions of the functioning of parties entering into politics now. I think that connecting the two is a politically inspired notion and so we can not really sympathize with it. The basic idea is acceptable though, I would like to repeat this. It is acceptable that the parties founded in the meantime or parties revived should not significantly burden the budget. Therefore, of our own will we have decided to return part of the properties used by us to the state for public purposes. It is in the competence of the state to decide how it would utilize them in accordance with public interests.

[...]



Document 53.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 3, 1989.*



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
August 3, 1989  
(The text of a video and audio tape. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** ... Then for the sake of those who may not have read it, the newspaper of MSZMP published a statement made by our press chief this week on Tuesday, August 1, from which I want to cite a few passages. Our press chief states that (*He reads out.*)

“In the discussions of the last couple of weeks it has been brought up several times that certain organizations are partly self-conceited, partly overly aggressive. My view on this is that this is characteristic of certain tone-setting representatives rather than of the parties themselves. To me it was quite disturbing in England too that the representatives of SZDSZ and the Democratic League of Independent Trade unions were at times overly self-confident and did not evaluate political and social development in Hungary in a precise way.” Another excerpt: “I consider it to be extremely important that representatives of every party should say to the public exactly what our consensus was at the Opposition Roundtable. In case there is no consensus – like in the case of the introduction of the institution of the president of the republic – then no statement in opposition to it should be made.”

I’m asking Csaba Varga now if he knows that the opposition Roundtable made such a decision, which said the participants made an agreement concerning the office of the president with six votes for and two abstentions? (*Csaba Varga nods.*) Then can you explain your statement? SZDSZ calls Csaba Varga to request rectification in Népszabadság as our press chief, to inform Népszabadság in the same way that the Opposition Roundtable has already made its decision on the issue of the office of the president, and also to apologize to those who have made this statement. For our press chief interpreted the decision of the opposition Roundtable in the wrong way, and not only did he interpret it inappropriately but he also attacked those who had done the right thing. This is my first question.

The other one is this. As far as I know MSZMP is our political opponent. It is absolutely wrong... I can accept if the representatives of the Hungarian People’s Party have objections to certain partner organizations. I have to say though that SZDSZ has always taken care not to give voice to such an opinion. When for example the honored representative of the people’s Party, Mr. [Imre] Kónya stated that he had some objections to SZDSZ the Alliance of Free Democrats did not start a dispute over it. But we feel we can no longer maintain this position, and we believe it is very inappropriate that the representative of the People’s Party as the press chief, spokesman of the Opposition Roundtable raises objections to some statements of the representatives of the Opposition Roundtable in the newspaper of MSZMP.

In addition to this I also have to say that Csaba Varga stated at the press conference yesterday that we had reach an agreement with MSZMP on not giving any information to the public about our negotiations. I have to say here that we have never made such an agreement with MSZMP. We have made a clear decision with MSZMP that the contents of our negotiations can be made public without any restriction. The original agreement has not been interpreted accurately by Csaba Varga. So what was the original agreement that we signed on June 10? Well, it said that the contents of the negotiations could be made public with no restrictions whatsoever. The parties agreed to inform the public regularly

about the progress of the negotiations, possibly in the form of a joint communiqué. But if the talks break off, or there is no way to issue a joint communiqué, then the parties are entitled to give voice to their own separate opinion. So we have never given up on informing the public but we have requested the publication of a joint communiqué, and thus we were not entitled to issue a separate statement. The claim made by press chief Csaba Varga that we have given up on informing the public was simply inappropriate... [...]

As a summary of my argument, the Alliance of Free Democrats requests that Csaba Varga should be dismissed as press chief of the Opposition Roundtable, and that we should elect a new press representative. Thank you.

**László Bruszt:** I ask now Csaba Varga if he wishes to respond to it.

**Csaba Varga:** Certainly. I have to start by saying, frankly, that I'm more than happy that SZDSZ, the trade unions and Endre Hann have brought up this issue in such a sharp tone. I'm very glad, and I'll tell you in detail why.

I have to start by saying that the Hungarian People's Party believes there have been hot debates dormant in the Opposition Roundtable for about two months now. The conflicts are serious, which unfortunately have so far been swept under the rug, swallowed, denied even by the Hungarian People's Party. It has not requested the replacement of Tölgyessy in such and such a function (*Interruption: Spokesman.*) It has not claimed that SZDSZ distorts the opinions this or that way, and at times it says things that are not really accurate, or true. Unfortunately, for the sake of representing an overly uniform position we have so far not wished to unleash such a dispute. But now such disputes are inevitable, I believe the one that has just broken out – even if I has broken out because of me – is extremely useful. If we can not bring this issues to a head and clarify the matters, if SZDSZ can not dispel the very tough objections of the Hungarian People's Party, then the unity and integrity of the Opposition Roundtable will be threatened. So the dispute ... I will tell you what I have in mind, don't worry.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I want to ask a question...

**László Kónya:** Don't interrupt him now! [...]

**László Bruszt:** Excuse me, Péter, let's hear Csaba Varga out. [...]

**Csaba Varga:** Well then, first I believe there have been two different assaults on me. Partly because of Endre Hann, and partly as a result of the objections made by SZDSZ. One thing here is a misunderstanding from the very first. I didn't say yesterday: we have agreed with MSZMP not to give information to the public; I said in television that what we had agreed on in writing – all the three parties together – was that we would not give information, any account on the work of the committees. That was all I said, nothing more. This is a misunderstanding. The rest comprises questions which have to be discussed indeed, we have to see who is right, me or some other people. I think we can separate three different problems here among those that have emerged.

One is a concrete questions, the dispute with János Kis at the press conference yesterday, and the letter written by Endre Hann – these are the concrete problems. The second question is what I criticized yesterday, which was not mentioned here among the arguments: the tone of voice characteristic of SZDSZ. Their aggressive tone, if you like, or

their sometimes intolerable arrogance. The third question is a wide range of problems; I have put it down in 13 points what problems we have with the Opposition Roundtable, and within it especially with SZDSZ and at times with FIDESZ.

I propose now that either I present all the arguments one by one, and we discuss each of them, or we open a separate item on the agenda for them, and we start reconsidering the Opposition Roundtable from the outset and try to work out an accurate system of regulations for the Opposition Roundtable in writing. Otherwise any further work will be jeopardized, create misunderstandings and lead to a break-up of the ORT into several parts – let me say again I think this is imminent danger, not in my opinion, I always speak on behalf of the Hungarian People's Party. So which route shall we take?

[...]

**László Kónya:** I want to ask why Iván Pető, speaking for SZDSZ, says in the same issue of Népszabadság on August 1, Tuesday, after having agreed on a moratorium on the issues brought up at the July 27 meeting, the following, this is what we want to know: (*He reads.*): “SZDSZ believes, and there is consensus on this in ORT”, etc.; “that in the present transitional situation the introduction of the office of the president is unacceptable”, etc. (*Unintelligible interruption.*) I go on. We have had much to swallow so far. When for instance Péter Tölgyessy said that except for SZDSZ there was no organization with a comprehensive political or economic program ... (*Péter Tölgyessy: It was not me but Bálint Magyar.*) Or it was Bálint Magyar, it's all the same. I apologize then, but you were speaking for SZDSZ. We did not say anything then, though we could have created a problem out of it which... and maybe we should have done so at that time. But we would like to make it clear that we hate, have always hated, all the manipulations made by MSZMP, the Hungarian Communist Party included, but I equally dislike the fact that the some methods are adopted by others now, in a different color and guise.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I'm glad that the People's Party have felt so far that these things have been swept under the rug and now they have come to light. I'm less happy hearing Csaba Varga say that truth can be interpreted in several different ways concerning the resolutions. For in my judgment the resolutions of ORT can only be interpreted in one way. The way I see it is that Csaba Varga has spoken in flat opposition to the resolutions at numerous places. There may be mistakes of coordination here, but I have very different information on several of our decisions, and let me now refer to a few of them.

One of them, also mentioned in the statement, is the issue of the head of state. I then asked our chairman, József Antall what to do – for I'm a member of this committee, Committee 1 –, whether I could represent ORT's resolution the same way I had done before. The answer of the chairman in office then was that the resolution of ORT was clear, for the following two weeks, without further ado, I was to follow the valid resolution of ORT. So it was not I who deviated from the valid resolution of ORT but our press chief. To begin with. I would like to learn about the position of the other negotiating parties on this, for it might decide matters; and I also want to refer to the minutes of the meeting.

Two. Concerning the division of powers. The position of ORT is clear on this issue too. As suggested by György Szabad, we have removed three issues from the jurisdiction of the committees, of the sub-committees. Namely, the issue of the head of state, the question of the date of the parliamentary elections, and the election system. The rest of the

functions stay within the sub-committees, all the more because everybody who works in these sub-committees – and I'm lucky to be one who is a member of two of them – knows that if we had all the issues at the table of ORT, we will have to be sitting in session all the time, even during the night. For the number of issues to be resolved is so great. So Csaba Varga gives a wrong interpretation of the resolution of ORT in this matter a as well. It is clear that we have full authorization in the sub-committees to represent what we have agreed on in the course of the negotiations, except for these three issues.

Document 54.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 10, 1989.*





## Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

August 10, 1989

(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**József Torgyán:** ... So the point essentially is that there is consensus within the Opposition Roundtable that we want to have a Parliament with one chamber, comprising roughly 350 members, in accordance with the number we have at present. The Roundtable made a decision, after hot debates, several discussions and voting by name, that 50% of the votes will come from lists – I will specify what sort of a list – and 50% from individual electorates, with the provision that elections in the individual electorates will take place in two rounds. Now, concerning the lists, the Roundtable decided on national lists, because in our view the population in most of the counties is such that, if I remember well, in the case of fourteen counties we could have seven mandates, in the case of one county three or four mandates, which would be definitely not enough for a county list. In case we had decided – the Roundtable judged – we had decided to merge several counties and formed districts, then we would end up with something close to a national list anyway, so then the county lists would not make sense. That was, in short, the position of the Opposition Roundtable.

Now, as for the nominations, we have taken the view that in the case of individual candidates 500, in the case of a national party, 10.000 nominations need to be collected in order to run candidates in any part of the country, thus no other kind of nomination would have been necessary for the national party to run candidates in the elections. Now, MSZMP has withdrawn its proposals in the trilateral negotiations, and adopted the view that in the case of individual candidates 1.000 nominations should be required, and with respect to the definition of a national party their starting points was that a party can be regarded as a national party if it can run one hundred individual candidates in Budapest and in at least four counties. So in other words, they have raised the original number of ten thousand to one hundred thousand.

Let me inform the joint Roundtable about something that, I have to say frankly, is a new development, so much so that is new even to me, because I have just noticed it after studying the minutes of the six political committees, so let me tell you that there has been an unfortunate mistake committed by our negotiating delegation, to be fixed soon, namely, that when MSZMP submitted its motion, then Péter Tölgyessy made a statement – but I stress we had no consensus on this – concerning twenty individual candidates... Individual candidates in twenty regions are required for a party to be recognized as a national party, which is just the double of what we have agreed on here. Or he said forty, I'm, sorry. Forty. This is how we get the twenty thousand. Thus... (*István Domonkos: We have accepted twenty.*) Yes, twenty...

[...]

**Imre Boross:** I want to add the following to what my colleague Torgyán has said. He spelled out the agreement made by the Opposition Roundtable. This is the present position of the Opposition Roundtable, until there is some modification in its opinion. This was the agreement. It does not mean, however, it cannot mean that the Independent Smallholder's Party, or any other party has a separate opinion of its own on the issue of the general elections. We stick to the agreement at the moment, though maybe we will make a

different decision in the Roundtable. As long as there is a valid agreement, we will stick to it while talking to the other party. However, the Independent Smallholder's Party believes that it is a proportionate elections system which is most compatible with a democratic country, and that's what we would prefer, that is, the 1945 or 1947 system. This is the opinion of the Smallholder's Party. This is one thing.

The second thing. I think it is quite inconceivable – let me stress again, we stick with the agreement, but our opinion is that I consider it to be inconceivable – to have one hundred sixty people on a list. The poor voter couldn't even read that much. As I do not agree with a purely individual electorate system – because in that case there is a lot of room for manipulating people – I equally can not agree with the full exclusion of people, for a list of one hundred and sixty would result in a complete exclusion of people.

[...]

**György Szabad:** Well, naturally, there is always a right for modifying one's position. But if we are conducting political negotiations here, then we cannot do it – let me ask our chairman to allow me to finish what I have to say – under the constant threat of changing views, as if we had the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads all the time. (*In a raised tone.*) Because it tries our temper, our earnest endeavors, and puts the hope of success at risk. This is my first comment. The other comment goes beyond the question of election rights. We mutually bring discredit to ourselves chiefly by saying that though we have come to an agreement, but everybody should know that we have our own true, separate opinion. As long as we are conducting a political fight for coming to agree on a joint position, this unfortunately can only be regarded as a move to jeopardize the success of forming a consensus, making team work extremely difficult. I just want to indicate the methodological aspect of this problem.

[...]

**István Prepeliczay:** Nothing has been said publicly concerning this issue yet. (*Noise.*) Imre Mécs was going to ask something, excuse me, Imre Mécs has long been ...

**Imre Mécs:** I want to call the attention – in full agreement with György Szabad – to the fact that we have made the decision after hot, tantalizing debates, and we should not put it under constant pressure of uncertainty. So until we find a new momentum, a change in conditions in the course of the negotiations, we should not press this issue, but let's move on so that we can provide directions for the negotiations for tomorrow.

[...]

Document 55.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 17, 1989.*



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
August 17, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**József Antall:** The essence of the proposal is as follows: *(He reads it out.)* "There have been several statements, unilateral moves recently which could interfere with the negotiations and question the work done by the Roundtable. Therefore, with a view to restoring the unity of the Roundtable and making the formulation of resolute positions possible we propose the following: expressing the need to maintain ORT, considering its operation important and indispensable in its present form until an agreement is reached, we have to strive for restraint, internal consensus, and eventually a nationwide agreement.

Second. Within this framework – considering the fact that there have been sharp differences of opinion both within ORT and outside concerning the office of the president, and that there have been several resolutions in this issue – we propose the following: ORT should denounce the attitude shown by the DEMISZ, Dr. Kilényi, and Dr. Budzsákliá in this question in the past period of time – I don't want to go into details – and at the same time the Roundtable should endorse the restoration of a constructive atmosphere and the resumption of the negotiations, also with a view to Imre Pozsgay's recent statement. At the intermediate-level political meeting convened to meet next week – the one summoned to meet at 17 hours next Thursday – ORT regards as the most important item on the agenda the adoption of a position on fundamental political and legal issues, and on its part it would like to submit a package, and expects the other two negotiating parties to do the same."

In other words, we – if possible – should make an attempt to go to the meeting on Thursday with a package in our hands with the help of which we could make some progress in the matters which not only induce inner conflicts but also confront us with the other two parties in a given matter, and besides, we can not make any progress...

This is the view we should make public at the press conference tomorrow, ORT should not go into details this time, stressing the abusive nature of unilateral steps and statements, the positive receptions of the Pozsgay statement, and the elaboration of a package proposal.

Let me hand out a document in relation to this under the title "Aspects of a package to insure preliminary agreement" that has been approved of by the presidency of MDF as our proposal, with the provision that the proposal was born when the Statement by the Democratic Youth Federation had not been made yet, and the atmosphere was very different from what we have now...

I want to stress that when MDF submits this proposal, it is not merely guided by the simple intention to accomplish some results in the negotiations with the other two sides, but we are also lead by the intent to attempt to arrive at an agreement in spite of the apparently unbridgeable differences of opinion and conflicts within the Roundtable, because without an inner agreement we can not negotiate properly with the other two sides, and therefore we urge for self-restraint and a rational pragmatic attitude in these matters. [...] It is obvious that the Roundtable should express its view concerning what has happened in the past period of time. So this is what I wanted to say.

[...]

**Miklós Gáspár Tamás:** I fully agree with József Antall on this issue. I believe that since there are significant differences of opinion among us concerning the essence of the thing – I mean here the office of the president – I think what we should talk about is simply that certain forces in MSZMP have wanted to torpedo the negotiations. So I believe we can agree on this much, and this is the target of the proposal that I would now like to submit on behalf of SZDSZ. It is simply a proposal for a communiqué, because in some form we have to respond to this, and I hope it will meet with support. The text goes like this. I will read it out slowly so that it should be clear to everybody.

*(He reads out.)* “The signature-collecting campaign concerning the office of the president and the date of general elections initiated by the DEMISZ and the statement made by deputy minister Géza Kilényi, member of the MSZMP negotiating delegation, which was meant to suspend the negotiations and divide the opposition, have put the participants of the Opposition Roundtable under inadmissible pressure. By this move DEMISZ has practically withdrawn from the negotiations. The Third Side should have to dissociate itself explicitly from this campaign. The Opposition Roundtable is not willing to change its responsible conduct of behavior under blackmail and the effects of an ultimatum. The fate of Hungarian democracy should not be decided by immature improvisations. A constitutional state can only be established by legal methods, and it is not possible to do so by excluding the opposition. The opposition can only take part in this process as an equal party, therefore it expressly rejects any attempt to dictate a policy for it to follow.” Now we should insert a sentence somewhere which would say – reacting to Pozsgay – that “At the same time we think it is reassuring to hear that Imre Pozsgay has distanced himself from any statement jeopardizing the agreement.”

It is a simple text, I wanted to reduce it to a minimum, and I believe, with some modifications, which will be proposed here, it can be accepted. It does not contain any political view which refers to the actual dispute. So in this sense it does not prejudice any political action on the part of certain parties of the opposition. [...]

**László Kövér:** I have a concrete supplementary proposal to the text. It says – in the form of a call, if I remember well – that the Third Side should dissociate itself from the campaign of DEMISZ. I believe we have to do the same with respect to MSZMP. I think it's not enough to acknowledge it with content that Pozsgay said something different. I believe we need to see that MSZMP also clarifies its position concerning the campaign of DEMISZ and Kilényi.

**Imre Kerényi:** This is a very appealing text, the one read out by Gáspár Tamás, I myself like it very much. It is clear, straightforward, there is no confused sentence in it, one that can be counter-charged. I suggest one word should be omitted, with due respect, the word “blackmail”, for in the same context we have “ultimatum”, which is sufficient. The text is more elegant if such a harsh word ... because then ... Thank you.

**László Kónya:** I also suggest removing the word “blackmail”, that's one thing I wanted to have the floor. The other is that I'm glad MDF and SZDSZ have come with a package... *(Interruption: It's only MDF.)* Sorry, right. And if we had produced our own package three or four weeks ago, then maybe these issues would not have emerged. That's all I have to say on this.

[...]

Document 56.

Meeting between the Representatives of the Opposition Roundtable and  
Boris Stukalin, Soviet Ambassador to Budapest  
[Speech by Viktor Orbán of the Federation of Young Democrats].  
*August 18, 1989.*





**Meeting between the Representatives of the Opposition Roundtable and Boris Stukalin, Soviet Ambassador to Budapest**  
**[Speech by Viktor Orbán of the Federation of Young Democrats].**

August 18, 1989

Excerpt

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** Allow me to add just a few remarks to the question of what we think about the possibility that the negotiations will eventually end successfully. We believe that the very chance of meeting you here today precipitates the prospect of making a successful agreement with the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party. Our organisation, inasmuch as it assertively comprises young people, considers it a particular privilege to have the chance of meeting representatives of Soviet diplomatic bodies. We intend to utilise this opportunity, which has never been granted to us so far, and hand over a memorandum next week that informs representatives of the Soviet Union about the political ideas of the Federation of Young Democrats.

You are certainly familiar with the fact that the issue of revealing the so-called historical white spots is just as important in Hungary as in the Soviet Union. Questions and views concerning our past and relation to the Soviet Union, or rather their sudden change concerns our generation most of all. The reason is that not long ago we were taught exactly the opposite of what even the Soviet Union has repeatedly expressed lately in this respect.

Perhaps this experience gives way to the pessimism of our generation when it comes to the possible outcome of the negotiations, as compared to the attitude of the previous speakers. Consequently, our generation – that is we who represent our organisation at the Roundtable, negotiating with the [Hungarian Socialist Workers'] Party –, we are of the opinion that one should only look at the facts when assessing the intentions of the party and the political prospects. That is why we observe with considerable apprehension that the party... the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party made hardly any progress in the most important, concrete issues.

Let me mention a few examples. Naturally, similarly to the previous speakers, I raise my voice with the hope at the back of my mind that this opinion will change over time. I must note, among other things, that the party has not made any concessions yet in the issue of winding up party organisations at workplaces. Neither has the MSZMP conceded in the question of abolishing the workers' militia, that all representatives at the Roundtable consider unconstitutional. No progress was made to guarantee that the political monopoly of the party in the army and the police forces is eliminated once and for all, so that politics and state service are separated within the armed forces. The Opposition Roundtable exposed specific suggestions in the issue, which have all been refuted so far. I do appeal to you: what else people of my generation and members of my organisation could think than the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party is aiming at preserving these armed corps and armed forces, the last resort of power in Eastern Europe, intact and unaffected by the opposition. We, young democrats, are much worried about this intent. For according to our political evaluation the main issue is not the elections here; we are quite optimistic about the elections. We consider the recent by-elections as a public opinion poll of some sort, on the basis of which we expect an overwhelming victory of the opposition. The question for us young democrats, though, is rather what will happen

afterwards? What will happen if the MSZMP who, in our estimation and according to the analysis of the recent results, loses the general elections, still retains authority over all the armed forces, and they are the only ones who have political bodies at workplaces.

Consequently, we believe that the question of stability, the stability of the transition, and the solution to that issue is in the hands of the MSZMP. Should the party act according to their allegedly democratic conviction in the questions I have proposed, the period of transition after the elections will suffer no instability whatsoever. The ultimate cause of our pessimism is that the MSZMP showed no sign of heading in that direction during the last month. Thank you.

**Boris Stukalin:** May I ask you about what you mentioned in your speech: the memorandum that you wish to present to us next week? What is it about, what are the main issues that it concerns?

**Viktor Orbán:** We think that the Federation of Young Democrats has often been branded by the Hungarian press as an organisation of anti-Soviet attitude. We had the opportunity to express our opinion in the issue, and we repeatedly stated that we do not consider ourselves anti-Soviet but we have principal views. Inasmuch as we have never encouraged expansion towards the Soviet Union, never incited people to any kind of rebellion against the Soviet people, never invited anyone to infringe the rights of the Soviet state. We think that this opportunity, sitting at the negotiating table with a representative of the Soviet diplomatic corps, gives us the chance of informing you in an articulated written memorandum about our principal opinions in all these issues – which basically determine the general and foreign policy of the Alliance of Young Democrats. In the memorandum we wish to state our standing and suggestions in terms of what changes we think necessary in Hungarian foreign policy<sup>1</sup>.

Let me point out, though, that it is strictly our opinion, bearing in mind that the Opposition Roundtable never intended to form a unanimous consensus in issues of foreign policy, therefore the organisations around this table represent a considerably wide range of foreign policy. Some of them hold opinions that are closer to yours, while others have views that are much more divergent – possibly ours is among the latter. Nonetheless, we strongly hope that these will be clarified in a memorandum.

[...]

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<sup>1</sup> On the basis of the available documentary evidence this promise seems to have been an improvisation of Victor Orbán since no such memorandum was presented to the Soviet Embassy subsequently.

Document 57.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 24, 1989.*



## Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable

August 24, 1989

(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Imre Boross:** At our last meeting we decided that today we would talk about the package submitted by MDF. Now, in order to make the discussion smooth, we have decided to send one representative of each participating organization of the Roundtable to conduct preliminary negotiations. This talks started yesterday and continued even today. So now, in accord with our previous decision, we should discuss the package of MDF. Yesterday my dear friend Füzessy, I believe, read out the resolution, that's what we should discuss now. My question is if anyone has a comment to make with respect to the agenda and the present situation. Salamon.

**László Salamon:** Very briefly, with respect to the agenda it just occurred to me, but it also belongs here. I had an inner scruple when I heard it that if we first discuss the topics one by one thoroughly, split into several details, then obviously we will come to some consensus in each. Tactically speaking we can be at a disadvantage in that, considering compensation from a wider perspective, if we, say, make concessions in a large group of issues so that in return we can get concessions in another group of questions, then it just might not work.

[...]

**Imre Boross:** Well, any comment on this? If not, then the only thing I can say to this is that we cannot change the agenda, because we have already agreed on it, for better or worse. [...]

have to say to some extent we are in a lucky position. The fortunate situation is that the most allergic question, the modification of the constitution concerning the office of the president will extend to next week. So I can imagine that the other party will make a concession in committee I/4, in committee I/6, and, say, we do not. This would rather be in their interest. What you say is in the interest of the other party, because the toughest issue will be the last one. If we should manage to – I'm saying it in inverted commas, if we should manage to – achieve some concession in committee I/4 or I/6, and we would discuss the constitution only afterwards, at the very end, then it would not be bad for us at all. (*Interruption: That is the best.*) That would be the best. If we could discuss everything fast. (*György Szabad: That's what the agreement says.*) Yes, of course. That's why I'm saying, so I don't know... I didn't understand the suggestion of my friend, Salamon, because from this perspective any agreement seems advantageous for us. (*Interruption: It's evident.*) Does anybody has ... concerning this ...? Now, well, in case there is none, then we should discuss this package ... shouldn't we?

[...]

**József Antall:** I want to speak now in order to prevent any misunderstanding for the future. We have agreed, since we have submitted a package, that the discussion of the package would have been the most fundamental issue, with respect to the fact that at the

intermediate-level negotiations it now converges with the reports prepared by the sub-committees, and it is advisable to start out from the report of the sub-committees, that is, to spell out what progress has been made in the sub-committees and what are the pending questions. So the issues included in the package which could not be resolved in the sub-committees will be taken up as pending questions in the second half of the negotiations. We would like to make it clear in principle, however, that all the cardinal issues brought up in the package must be discussed at the talks today, tomorrow and next week. So in case ORT does not agree with it, then it should say so now; if members of ORT do not agree that the issues listed in this package should be brought up at the intermediate-level trilateral negotiations, then it should be discussed now. We need a position by ORT in these matters, so first we have to come to an agreement on this. If anyone has the illusion that the whole idea can be butchered and then forgotten what you oppose, then we would strongly object to it.

[...]

**Tibor Baranyai:** I want to make a short comment on this last proposal. Naturally there is no objection to discuss this so-called package proposal, but no one has promised to agree with it and accept it in full. And no organization can expect the rest of us to do so. Let me just refer to one thing: it is not our intention, not in our interest to advance the date of the elections, and we would veto it, if anyone wanted to force it on us.

**József Antall:** No one has wished to do so.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** Let me add to the aforementioned things on the part of MDF that if we do not take the package as a whole but start slicing it up, then the whole thing should be considered void and null. For this was not the position of MDF, we have a different opinion in a number of fundamental issues. It was a memorandum to facilitate a possible consensus, a kind of synthesis of several issues brought up here, and if we can not view it as a whole, and we always look at the costs of something, then there is no point in negotiating. What we can do is that after the progress we can make today and tomorrow we can evaluate again how things are, if there is a need for it, but if there isn't we shouldn't do that either.

[...]

**József Antall:** In other words, if we withdraw it, we then maintain the right to enforce our own position, (*László Sólyom: Independent position.*) in every issue again. (*Imre Boross: Freedom of action.*), freedom of action, and we withdraw the attempt to reconcile the views of the Roundtable, and if the Roundtable is not capable of agreement, we can not make further attempts.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** I thought that yesterday, and also today, we would talk about, I thought it would turn out whether we had a joint position on these extremely important issues, ones on which the participants have very different views, whether we can reach a consensus, or

the whole thing is just a waste of time. Now this is put off again to next week. For those questions will emerge again then. And in contrast we no start talking about some petty technical questions, whether the television will broadcast our programs in color or in black-and-white, that's what we will spend the next two days discussing, and we will again postpone the discussion of our serious conflicts. Well, I don't want to accept this, then the package does not exist, let's just go on negotiating, the blame is not on us. We would have liked to clarify things, and would also have liked to see the Roundtable not fail on this yesterday. Characteristically, we failed yesterday, and today one and a half hours have passed already, and we are still nowhere. Then the package should be removed from the agenda. That's what I propose.

**József Antall:** The representatives of the participating organizations have had very different opinions on fundamental issues. They are nearly unbridgeable views, and in the accompanying letter too, we stressed our endeavor to achieve unity in ORT. Apparently we have failed to restore the unity of ORT, that's why we have attempted to summarize all the possible positions, in order to save ORT from the danger of dissolution. Because if next week we sit down...

In other words, if one organization says they want to have a president before the elections, another one say, they want it only after the parliamentary elections; if one says they agree with a concept of presidency worked out by the Ministry of Justice, one which has its own jurisdiction not requiring the counter-signature of a minister, etc., and the other party says they want a just a symbolic weak president – then this will not make a Roundtable. We cannot sit down as a negotiating party like this, then it is much more fair to say that the Roundtable does not work. And for the time being that's what we see going on at the talks both yesterday and today.

[...]





Document 58.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 24, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

August 24, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes)

[...]

**György Drucker:** I have been authorized to explain briefly what has happened so far during the negotiations of working committee I/1. I should point out in advance in the name of all three sides that in committee I/1. the negotiations have had a pleasant atmosphere and were quite constructive most of the time. As a result, we were able to present to the medium-level committee a draft amendment to the Constitution which of course needs to be elaborated further.

Nevertheless, it seems to be sufficient to help us to reach a final agreement. This is ample proof of constructive cooperation and a rejection of the accusations directed against us by Deputy Minister Géza Kilényi during the last session. As a result of hard and fast work we managed to put together a summary of our activities, now in front of you, which, I believe, clearly identifies where we have reached consensus and what debated issues remain to be reconciled. This spares me the obligation to get caught up in a lengthy introduction of the state of affairs of our committee.

I would briefly highlight a couple of notions while outlining the structure of the summary.

In the first section we have noted that the three sides have sat down in awareness of the need to modify the text of the present Constitution in reference to some significant issues – this awareness has not changed at all, and we should confirm it again.

Then we pointed out the topics where the sides could reach consensus after a long debate. Namely, we believe that the preamble of the present Constitution should be repealed. We think that the expressions referring to state socialism should be omitted from the first chapter of the Constitution and normative provisions should dominate it instead. Moreover, certain aspects of the state organization itself should be significantly altered. For instance we need a government accountable in front of the Parliament and the Presidential Council should be abolished. Since no genuine debate is expected today in this issue, I would only point out here that there are various opinions in connection with the internal structure of the state as proposed by the delegations. The three sides have agreed that the Parliament should be the fundamental institutional body of the representational democracy based on party pluralism. The negotiating sides have also reached a unified position in the issue of providing separate regulations in the Constitution for the military and for the police, which was not the case so far. There is full consensus concerning the issue that human rights and citizens' rights should already be extensively regulated, in accordance with international agreements, taking the transition period into consideration.

In section three we have enlisted debated issues in nine points where we expect the political decisions of the medium-level committee to provide us with theoretical guidance. We are a bit disappointed to realize that contrary to expectations it can not be done today. I would only highlight five of these issues to indicate where we would need decisions of the medium level next week.

One of the questions is whether the first chapter of the Constitution should include a reference to the socialist character of the state. Should it appear that a special role should be attributed to various forms of public property?

We also need a decision on the elements of incompatibility of Members of Parliament to be actually defined.

A decision is needed concerning the issue of what kind of limitations are considered reasonable to put on members of the military and of the police in respect of their activities in political parties.

We also expect a decision on whether we already need to create new arms of the nation to replace the one symbolizing state socialism.

Thank you for your attention.

[...]

**Balázs Horváth:** We have agreed that we would not yet close the provision related to parties. In the draft bill concerning the right of public meeting another provision of law is being prepared covering the financial conditions and the functioning of parties. One would contain the present rules, the other would contain the basic legal rules.

An agreement has to be reached concerning the modification of the law of public meeting in reference to possible party members – this issue is fundamentally important. Who should and could be limited in his otherwise constitutional right to join a political party? An agreement in principle has been reached concerning the President of the Republic and the members of the Constitutional Court. In the Opposition Roundtable's view this circle should be enlarged. The MSZMP and the Third Side have different views on this.

We intended to incorporate in the law of the right of public meeting that a precondition of registering a newly founded party should be a statement of assets. It will gain a significance later, since in connection with the law concerning the financing and functioning of parties we will have to regulate what kind of donations can be given to and accepted by the parties. There is a contradiction here that can be easily resolved – in our opinion and everyone else's opinion – concerning the possible amount of foreign donations and the obligation of the public announcement of the person who gives the donation. But the draft bill also includes two alternatives.

We were unable to agree on the provision concerning the limitations to be placed on the activities of parties. A basic text was put together which is a quasi-agreement, as it turned out later. The text went like this: „parties can not be organized and can not pursue their activities at the workplace”. No agreement was reached on this. The negotiations were halted at this point. It has to be emphasized that when we say 'workplace' we mean the armed bodies and other forms of contractual employment as well.

The third fundamental topic where we could not agree is the provision concerning the assets of the MSZMP. The negotiating sides have not found a single point in common. The Opposition Roundtable's view is that the MSZMP should account for its assets to the nation, and no advance can be expected until this issue has been resolved. In this respect the negotiations are stalled, we can not continue with the basic text either, unless we work out what kind of assets the MSZMP should account for. Since the MSZMP does not want to account for its assets, we are unable to work out the conditions of it. This provision could be included among the regulations to be

enacted, that is, the position in respect of the assets of the MSZMP, since it is closely connected with the issue of the functioning of other parties in the future.

[...]

**Zsolt Zétényi:** Two additional issues have been raised in Committee 6 which were brought up here for the consideration of the medium-level committee.

The first issue is that of disbanding the Worker's Militia. We are requesting a firm position on this, a resolution to disband.

The other issue is that the concept of 'violence' was impossible to define in Committee 6 because in the MSZMP's view the call for civil disobedience qualifies as violence. Well, if it qualifies as violence, certain authorizations of the armed bodies and the police would become applicable. Civil disobedience is such an all-inclusive term that we think it is unacceptable to regard it as violence. Our committee was unable to reach an agreement concerning this issue. I would like to request from the sides to drop the qualification of civil disobedience as 'violence'. And the MSZMP should make another proposal in connection with this. After all, the concept itself is difficult to define. Concerning this, it has been voiced that a call for civil disobedience in relation to any provision of law qualifies as violence. This is unacceptable for us.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** First, I would like to reflect on the issue of the Worker's Militia. The delegation of the MSZMP believes that the dilemma here is not as simple as disband it or keep it together. Therefore we would like to ask the honoured participants to exercise patience and give us a chance to propose a compromise, naturally still within the timespan of these negotiations. On Monday or Tuesday, whatever we agree upon.

We would like to get the same opportunity to clarify the concept of 'violence'. It is a category of concepts, we promise to examine it carefully. Now I can only share my own guesses with our negotiating partners. I believe that at the beginning of next week we can arrive at a consensus in respect of this.

[...]



Document 59.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 25, 1989.*





**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

August 25, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**András Tóth:** ...The proposal of the Third Side has been that the civil organizations and movements should also have the right of putting up candidates, with the necessary limitations and in an accurately defined manner. In opposition to this, the expert opinion of the Opposition Roundtable and the MSZMP was that it is hardly possible to reconcile a practice that would actually make the putting up of candidates unlimited with the creation of a representational parliament. So our experts' recommendation has been that political parties and citizens should have the chance of putting up candidates. My request is to discuss point 7 11 during the debate and regard it as an issue of negotiation.

The first section of the document that we put together contains questions in relation to the electoral system. In connection with the electoral system there is only one open question if my interpretation is correct: the proportions or the number of seats decided in individual constituencies and on the candidate list of the parties – as we all know, the positions of the three sides are quite different. In the original proposal of the MSZMP individual constituencies would have an 80 percent weight which means roughly 300 seats and seats from the party lists would have a 20 percent weight (with about 50 people on the list) in the system to introduce. The Opposition Roundtable has supported the well-known system of fifty-fifty and still regards it as the proposed subject of negotiation. The Third Side thinks that a proportion of one to two – representing the present political and institutional environment – would be reasonable to set up.

[...]

**Imre Nagy:** The other issue I would like to raise here, and it has been touched upon in András Tóth's proposition, that the Third Side is in favor of giving the right of putting up candidates to civil organizations and movements, just like in the special committees. The Third Side considers it a subject of negotiation. We believe that without discussing and deciding upon this issue first, for self-explanatory reasons we can not formulate our position concerning question number one, that is, concerning the proportion of individual constituencies and party lists.

[...]

**Imre Boross:** The Opposition Roundtable could hardly modify its position for the following reasons. There is a connection between voting for individuals and voting for lists. Undoubtedly, in the individual constituency human character is of primary importance whereas party lists are mostly about the party although the persons themselves are not insignificant either. This will come up when we discuss the question of county lists versus national lists. Since we would quite naturally refuse to have national lists – the citizen is unable to count and examine 175 persons. Since party and

person are equally significant, in our proposal there would be no more than four to fifteen people on a county list if we accepted the system of fifty-fifty. If a person who is an individual candidate can also be included in the party list, or even in several county lists of the same party as we mentioned it yesterday, then after studying the list and all the persons the citizen can really make his decision since he is aware of the possibility that the person on top of the list could also give back the seat he won on the list.

I have to say that in this we have a certain amount of experience – being a representative of a historic party – we have certain *historical* experience of this electorate system which proved itself in '45 and also in '47 although there were no individual constituencies then, or I can even refer back to '39 which was mixed; individual candidates have always been allowed to run on more than one county lists of the same party.

[...]

**András Tóth:** ...What we say is that, especially in respect of national lists, if a party really wants to be judged by the people as a whole, then it should gain such a wide support in the individual constituencies that would represent a significant number of candidates to run. We suggest – in accordance with our proposal that has been written down, and to my knowledge, the Third Side has taken a similar position on this – that candidates should be put up in at least one third of individual constituencies to allow a party to set up a list. Of course it also depends on the number of individual constituencies, since if there are 300 of them, one third means another number than the one resulting from 175 constituencies. Therefore we are of the opinion that the proposal in its present form is quite realistic. The second part of our proposal – stating that putting up of candidates would be necessary to accomplish in the capital and at least in four counties – stems from the realization that this way a party can prove that it has a national influence and that it has not gained influence and political significance in one or two regions of the country. We request a discussion of our proposals. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. And now from the Opposition Roundtable Dr József Torgyán may speak.

**József Torgyán:** Thank you. First of all, let me raise an issue of interpretation. In our view, and I think the original interpretation of the special committee has also represented consensus in this, the original „ten-thousand proposal” included – identically to the written material of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – that on this basis a party with a nationwide coverage would not only have the right to run a candidate on its list anywhere in the country, but also as an individual candidate. This is what I have to add to this presentation, but as far as I know, there is consensus among us in this, there are no differences.

**Imre Nagy:** In accordance with its position held so far, the Third Side still supports the idea that it should be a pre-condition of putting up a list that a party or political force – the latter to be debated later on – is capable of putting up candidates in a significant portion of constituencies. However, we think it might be possible to set a lower floor than one third, if necessary.

[...]

**Imre Boross:** We are now in a position where we have to praise the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Well, we do. We do agree with their proposal. We are satisfied with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But we can also understand the MSZMP in one aspect – the MSZMP intends to exclude certain small parties that have recently begun to mushroom. If we think along these terms, well, then we think along these terms and I can understand it. But what do I think personally? I guess we should say why not, let these small parties appear and collapse in the eye of the people through their secret vote. Let us not give them a chance to say that... [sic! *translator*] because, you know, perhaps we will be able to collect enough recommendations, but let the small parties come forward as well and let them show themselves, and then – and please allow me to use sport terminology here – let them be knocked out through the secret vote. The other thing is, please accept our main line of reasoning, that is, that we regard an exaggerated amount of recommendations as practically open votes.

[...]

**András Tóth:** Honoured participants! I think it is point 7 that will result in the hottest debate in this circle, since two solutions have emerged that show significant differences. Our proposal, that is, that of the MSZMP – supported constructively by the Third Side as well – is that we should create a two-round electorate system which would not exclude the running of more candidates in the second round, making the political struggle open in the second round. In our view, in the present circumstances when various political forces with various pursuits are colliding uncovered at the elections, then the legal, that is, artificial limitation of the number of possible candidates to two in the second round would be equal to significantly reducing and curtailing the citizens' right of decision.

We would like to remind that the classical two-round electoral system worked out and used in France provides a similar solution with the distinction that their system requires 12,5 percent for the second round thereby allowing the citizen to choose from candidates who have real support behind them, but it also allows the political players to form alliances for the second round. It is included in this solution as well. I think the law should not prevent the citizen from being in the position to decide and it should not prevent the political players from making agreements.

In accordance with this, we suggest that candidates who acquire 15 percent should be allowed to run again in the second round – and since mathematically it is possible that no one reaches the floor if there are a lot of candidates, the law should prescribe that at least three candidates should run in the second round.

The experts of the MSZMP have supported the proposal of the Third Side expressed at the end of the section that if the first round is not successful due to low voter turnout, then the law should prescribe a 25-percent participation for the second round. This is necessary because in unusual circumstances it may happen that following a low turnout in the first round, an even lower turnout occurs in the second round where just a couple of votes might actually decide on a seat. Therefore we think these proposals should be accepted. Thank you for the attention.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. József Torgyán would like to speak on behalf of the Opposition Roundtable.

**József Torgyán:** Thank you. In our opinion, the objections of the MSZMP are not theoretical and are not based on professional judgement, but rather on the results of the mid-term elections. That is to say, the discussion on this issue has been quite smooth in the special committee until the recently held mid-term elections, when the MSZMP took up a position practically opposing to its own previous proposal.

Up to that point there was a complete concurrence of opinion that in the first round a candidate wins with an absolute majority of votes if more than fifty percent of the voters participated, and in the second round only the two candidates would run who got the greatest number of votes, so that it would be avoided that whereas in the first round a candidate needs an absolute majority of votes to win, he could win a seat with a relative majority of the votes in the second round, that is, with only a small portion of the votes.

This solution is unacceptable for the Opposition Roundtable. It would not only result in an unfair and distorted electoral system, but – I have to say – it would also threaten the seriousness of the elections. Thus, the Opposition Roundtable's position has theoretical foundations, and so we can not change it.

[...]

Document 60.

Conversation of Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher with  
Minister President Németh and Foreign Minister Horn,

Palais Gymnich

[Overview of the Situation in Eastern Europe].

*August 25, 1989.*



**Foreign Minister Genscher's Notes on the Conversation of Chancellor Kohl with  
Minister President Németh and Foreign Minister Horn; Palais Gymnich  
[Economic Crisis and Soviet Troops in Hungary and Poland]**

August 25, 1989

*Participants:* Minister President Németh, Foreign Minister Horn, Chancellor Kohl, Foreign Minister Genscher, Hungarian translator.

**MP Németh** explained the developments in the People's Republic of Hungary. It was the opposition parties' tactic to hold the HSWP accountable for overall developments, which was not completely unfounded. Within the Party there is an intense discussion taking place between reformers and those who are against reforms. Even among the reformers there are those who would rather unite with the anti-reformers than to continue reforms: Grósz, for example.

The Party is threatened by a split. He thinks it is possible that a communist party left of the HSWP will be formed, and that approximately 200,000 of the 700,000 [HSWP members] would join. One shouldn't be concerned about this; it could even give the HSWP a larger degree of acceptance among the people. They want to prevent their party from facing what happened to the PUWP.

The developments in Hungary and Poland were being watched closely by the other Pact members. At the Bucharest summit, Hungary presented its new concept of cooperation within the Warsaw Pact. This was rejected by everybody, including Shevardnadze. When Gorbachev arrived on the scene, he adopted [the Hungarian concept], and it was then finally accepted.

The Hungarian opposition parties were also discussing the question of neutrality. This was not the goal of his Party. If attempts were made through outside influence to prevent the development of reforms, however, this would become an issue for his party too.

In view of developments in Warsaw, Ceausescu had demanded a summit. Without doubt, he also had Hungary on his mind. Gorbachev had strictly refused a conference on this theme. Budapest naturally refused as well.

He is in close contact with Rakowski.

He could say the following about the telephone conversation between Rakowski and Gorbachev<sup>1</sup>:

1. Rakowski declared that Poland would not detach itself from the Warsaw Pact
2. Regarding the situation of the PUWP, Rakowski said that it was not in a position to force their demands on Solidarity.

Gorbachev responded to this by saying that the PUWP had all the instruments of power at its disposal by which it had to enforce its authority. He, Németh, would like to say that the developments in Poland put Gorbachev in a difficult position. He was also in a difficult

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<sup>1</sup> August 22, 1989

position in Moscow. It was the goal of the Hungarian government to do everything it can to ensure the success of Gorbachev's policies.

**Németh** said that Hungary was in a severe economic crisis. At the same time it had to bring about the transition to market economy, and immediate results were expected. The cogwheels of the process did not yet fit with each other. For 20 years he had dealt with economic policy. He was increasingly realizing the damage the past 40 years had inflicted on Hungary. Hungary had a 6.5 billion debt of which 3 billion were not recoverable. 2 million Hungarians live below the minimum standard of living.

Basically, exports to the east should be restricted in order to improve the supply situation. Hungary had to deal with countermeasures by the Soviet Union, above all with regards to the supply of energy. There had already been a power failure recently. Aside from that, the export capacity was too heavily oriented towards COMECON and its lower standards.

He recalled what Genscher had said in Budapest<sup>2</sup>: the West must not only deal in words but also in deeds. This could only be stated with regards to Austria and the Federal Republic; all others have only words.

He could not believe his ears when he heard the television report on U.S. Senator Cranston's press conference in Budapest, where it was stated that the U.S. should only be counted on for aid if a coalition government was established in Hungary. They needed results before the Party conference on October 6 in order to continue their course in the Party. It was above all important that the U.S. worked towards greater flexibility on the part of the IMF.

**[Chancellor Kohl]** stated that he would speak with President Bush on Tuesday or Wednesday. He would tell him how mistaken such declarations were - Bush also did not think like that - and ask him to support Hungary.

One should not rush reforms. He told BM [Federal Minister Norbert] Blüm, who was travelling to Poland today, to tell Wałęsa as well as the new minister president that they should keep the limits of their actions in mind in order to avoid endangering the whole thing.

The position of his government in Hungary was not too bad. Gallup had conducted a poll and found out the following: 87% recognized the media, 77% the Church, 67% the government and only 30-35% the parties, including the HSWP and the opposition. The Unions ranked last.

One had to ask oneself: to whom can we turn for help? To Gorbachev? No. To the COMECON? No. One can only turn to the West.

"I ask you, Herr Bundeskanzler, can we count on your support? I don't mean only the Federal Republic, but also the entire West. Will you support the reform course, or is the motto 'wait and see?' We need your decision before our party conference on October 6."

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<sup>2</sup> June 9, 1989



[Chancellor Kohl] sees three levels of action:

- 1) What can the Federal Republic of Germany do? We can give an answer to this in the first half of September.
- 2) What can the EC do?
- 3) What can the U.S. do? He will speak with Bush about this.

**Németh:** The U.S. should help with the IMF. Their problem is that the Grosz regime created the "Worldpass" (*Weltpass*) for Hungary effective on January 1, 1988. Accordingly, every three years, each Hungarian could exchange up to 350 U.S. dollars. Not only travelers would do this, but also those who remain in the country. Grósz didn't foresee the consequences. If he, Németh, reversed the policy, he would be overthrown.

As a result of this development, Hungary had a negative balance of payments, even though the trade balance of \$600-700 million is positive. The operation of liabilities resulted in a yearly deficit of \$1-1.2 billion.

Hungary had a debt of 400-500 million with altogether 4 to 5 large German banks. One possibility they had considered as a solution to this problem was the purchase of existing enterprises in Hungary, in whole or in part by German enterprises. But instead of transferring the price to Hungary it would be used to service the debt.

[Chancellor Kohl] stated that this was out of the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. He would ask Herr Herrhausen of the Deutsche Bank to go to Hungary to discuss this question. He would also speak to the president of the [German] Bank Association, Herr Roeller of Dresdner Bank.

**Genscher** asked for a listing of the enterprises in question that would be for sale, and otherwise suggested that three papers be completed in the course of the next week:

- 1) What does Hungary expect from the Federal Republic of Germany?
- 2) From the EC?
- 3) From the U.S.?

As far as the EC is concerned, he would speak with Dumas.

It was agreed to provide the papers. They should be transmitted to Genscher personally via Ambassador Horváth. Horváth had been briefed on everything.

**Németh** then spoke about disarmament. Hungary had asked Gorbachev to speed up the Soviet troop withdrawal and, if possible, to remove the last Soviet troops from Hungary by 1992.

**Horn** said that the U.S. and the S[oviet] U[nion] were obviously in agreement that a fundamental political agreement on conventional disarmament had to be reached by the early 1990s. The technical details of carrying out the agreement could then be discussed.

One needed to ask oneself, whether the removal of Soviet troops from Hungary could not be made easier if the Americans removed a considerable number of troops from Europe.

One could imagine, for example, that all Soviet troops would be removed from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and with units remaining only in the GDR.

To this Genscher responded that certainly American units would also be affected by the removal, but that an unchanged presence of Soviet troops in the GDR represented a first-rate threat factor. The Western proposal that there should be a certain proportion between one's own troops and foreign troops was made with the GDR in mind.

**[Chancellor Kohl]** stated that this could be checked, but keeping in mind these considerations.

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Translated by  
Catherine Nielsen  
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Document 61.

Foreign Minister Genscher's Notes on the Conversation of Chancellor Kohl  
with Minister President Németh and Foreign Minister Horn  
during Lunch;  
Palais Gymnich.  
*August 25, 1989.*



**Conversation of Chancellor Kohl and Prime Minister Genscher with Minister President Németh and Foreign Minister Horn during Lunch, Palais Gymnich  
[Overview of the Situation in Eastern Europe]**

August 25, 1989

Re: Working visit of Hungarian Minister President Németh on August 25, 1989 at Gymnich Castle.  
Conversation during Lunch.

**Chancellor Kohl** inquired about developments in Poland. **Minister President Németh** stated that he had recently had a longer conversation with General Secretary Rakowski. Rakowski exhibited optimism but at the same time admitted that mistakes had been made in the past. One mistake was that the leadership depended too heavily on the situation reports of the apparatus. Another mistake was that the Farmers' Party had been seen as a type of "Messenger Boy". He, **Németh**, was under the impression from the start that Kiszczak could not be successful. Incidentally, the Farmers' Party is apparently fed up with its present role.

Jaruzelski, with whom he had also spoken, told him that in 1981 they had won militarily but lost politically.

It was Hungary's desire that the new Polish government be successful. Its most difficult challenge is to get the country to regain its belief in itself. In the last ten years Poland had turned towards nihilism. As an example, **MP Németh** pointed to the role foreign currency played in the Polish economy.

**FM Horn** added that in his view it was "madness" that the interior and defense ministers were responsible directly to the president. The new government could certainly not achieve any miracles if one considered that the army and the police continued to be answerable to the president. This could lead to a schizophrenic state of affairs.

**Chancellor Kohl** stated that he was also skeptical about further developments. One had to recognize that Solidarity was not a party, but was divided into factions. Up to now, Solidarity had been strong in saying "No."

Regarding German-Polish relations, we would like to come to a swift conclusion of negotiations. We had a useless discussion in this country [Germany] over his trip to Poland. He had been advised to go there right away. He rejected this. German-Polish relations were extremely complicated. This had been true not only for the present or the period since 1933, but had been evident during the Weimar Republic.

Following the conclusion of the Warsaw Treaty in 1970, they had been hopeful regarding further developments in German-Polish relations. These hopes had evaporated. They could not allow for a repetition of this [experience]. One could not allow for another disappointment in the German-Polish relationship.

We would see German-Polish relations as a contribution to stabilization in Europe. Under no circumstances do we want destabilization. This was why developments in Poland,

Hungary but also in the GDR were so important for us. Concerning the GDR, he believed that no change would occur under the current leadership.

**MP Németh** said that during his time as economic secretary in the Central Committee of the HSWP, he had had a long talk with Honecker and had presented the Hungarian position to him. Though Honecker had listened, he then presented him with three books which he strongly recommended. They dealt with his speeches, with information on the last SED Party conference and the SED program once in his talk.

**Chancellor Kohl** interjected that one had to recognize Honecker wanted to stay in office at all costs. Any reform would cost him his office. Even if he personally rejected that, one could understand this to a certain degree. On the other hand, what he did not understand was the developments in the CSSR. Štrougal told him during his visit to Prague which reforms need to be implemented. In response to his question when he would start implementing reforms, Štrougal only shrugged his shoulders. Completely incomprehensible was the Czechoslovak government's policy towards the Catholic Church.

**FM Horn** stated that one should not forget that following 1968 the lives of 1 million people in Czechoslovakia were radically changed. During this time, Jakeš was at the head of the purges.

To **PM Genscher's** question as to what role Lenárt plays, **FM Horn** answered that it is "of the same sort."

**PM Németh** stated that Štrougal was a very sensible person. One had to acknowledge that the present leadership could not come to terms with the past- 1968. On the other hand, he had the impression that the Czechs were more open to reforms than the Slovaks. He was convinced that it is only a question of time before the discussion of reforms goes further in Czechoslovakia as well. It should not come to an explosion.

**Chancellor Kohl** stated that exactly this danger, however, was very real.

**Chancellor Kohl** asked how the Hungarian side judged developments in Romania. **MP Németh** stated that at the meeting in Bucharest, Ceaucescu had come across as a mentally ill person. He supported this with a series of details from Ceaucescu's conduct during the conference. By the way, the situation of the Romanian people was depressing.

In response to **Chancellor Kohl's** question about Zhivkov and the developments in Bulgaria, **Németh** stated that the economy there was permanently being reorganized. There were considerable economic problems.

**MP Németh** mentioned that the Bulgarian Politburo had repeatedly asked for membership in the Soviet Union.

**Chancellor Kohl** stated that our policy oriented itself around the fact that Hungary, but also a country such as Austria, was a part of Europe. International politics had two points of reference: one is disarmament and the other is economic cooperation. There was a third element that, unfortunately, was not considered enough, and that was culture. Europe

must not only be aligned economically. In spite of the undoubted priority of economic problems, cultural identity must play an important role in German-Hungarian relations.

*Hartmann*

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Document 62.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 28, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**  
August 28, 1989  
(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Imre Nagy:** Concerning this second issue of who can get into the second round, based on the arguments outlined last time, the Third Side still maintains its position that the second round should not be limited to two persons, that is, two candidates. We can support a solution where at least three candidates reach the second round. We can not accept the argument that this way a candidate could acquire a seat with a relative majority of votes since there is no limitation of participation in the second round. If there is, in a special situation when voter turnout is lower than fifty percent in the first round, this floor is only 25 percent which means that half of 25 percent can still yield a seat, which can not be considered a majority of votes under any circumstances.

As far as the second issue is concerned – how to share the fifty ‘compensational’ seats – we can also accept the position that it should be done on the basis of the results of the first round, since the first round is more representative of the degree of support behind various parties or organizations. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Imre Pozsgay would like to speak.

**Imre Pozsgay:** I would also like to outline my opinion concerning our position in the issues of procedures and rules of running in the second round.

In connection with Imre Nagy’s statement, in the second round there would be a relative majority of votes almost exclusively if we compare the results of the election with the total number of citizens with the right to vote, since the basic principles of the law we have agreed on make it explicit that the election is only successful if there has been at least a 25-percent voter turnout. The risk of candidates getting seats in Parliament with a relative majority of votes is an essential feature of the two-round electoral system.

My other observation concerns the French practice – although Mr. Boross or György Szabad made a reference to the British method. Several candidates run in the second round in France as well, and no one has tagged this procedural option undemocratic.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Honoured Participants! Thank you for the opportunity to break for discussion. Before I would disclose our decision, I would like to ask something, like the Opposition Roundtable just did.

The delegation of the MSZMP do not really appreciate the rigid position of the Opposition Roundtable in this issue, since the delegation of the MSZMP has proved to be flexible and eager for compromises concerning the fundamental questions – in fact, two of them – in the first stage of the negotiation. To name them: in the issue of the two-round system, and the relative weight of the party list

and the individual constituencies. Keeping this in mind and as a result of a brief brainstorming session I would like to make the following proposal.

The Opposition Roundtable should accept our suggestion that the limit, that is, the floor should be raised from 15 percent to 25 percent to avoid a fragmented second round with too many candidates, but concerning the 'compensation' we can not accept Imre Nagy's position. The reasonable amount of left-over votes to be compensated are the ones left after the decision. Thus, where the first round is not decisive, the basis of compensation should be the votes left over in the second round.

I would like to ask if the Opposition Roundtable is willing to accept the proposal of the MSZMP considering these experiences and the offer we just made?

**Imre Boross:** Please, excuse us, but now it is us who would appreciate a two-minute break.

*[Break]*

**Imre Boross:** In order to prove our willingness to arrive at a compromise we would put it like this: we do accept the first proposal of the MSZMP. Those who receive at least 15 percent of the votes in the first round should go on to the second round, but three candidates as a minimum; in exchange for this we would like to ask the MSZMP to accept the results of the first round as the basis for the national list – considering that the expression of the citizens' will, that is, their direct votes are apparent in the first round. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Third Side may speak.

**Imre Nagy:** I believe the proposal now outlined by Mr Boross is identical with what I proposed on behalf of the Third Side in the previous round; I would not like to make a new one.

**Imre Pozsgay:** In the proposal we just heard we see the honest intention to arrive at an agreement. The delegation of the MSZMP accepts the proposal as it has been voiced by Mr Boross. We did not waste time either, we considered the setting of the limit, and now that we are back I can also tell you that the delegation of the MSZMP accepts the four-percent limit.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much, I guess there is no need to sum up the agreement now. I am glad that the proposal of the Third Side was accepted after all both by the MSZMP and by the Opposition Roundtable.

[...]

**Magda Kósáné Kovács:** Last time I asked the Honoured Delegation of the Opposition Roundtable to kindly review the initial agreement. It is very incorrect to attribute a meaning to the initial agreement which can not be extracted from it. I would like to ask Mr. Boross to find the exact place where the initial agreement would declare that the Third Side is not a negotiating partner of equal rights to those of the other partners at the trilateral negotiations.

[...]

**György Szabad:** Honoured Participants! This is a text we are all familiar with, I refer to the relevant section of the text adopted on 10 June. I think that if we examine it carefully considering its context, then its intention and meaning will become obvious: „All three parties taking part in the negotiations have equal rights during the development of consensus.” (I would like to skip a sentence here, because it is irrelevant for the dispute.) „Social organizations and movements listed as the ‘Third Side’ – whose joining the negotiations was accepted by the Opposition Roundtable as a compromise during the preparatory meetings – declare that they support the intention of the MSZMP and of the Opposition Roundtable to engage in a constructive dialogue and to arrive at a consensus, and they wish to become active participants in this process.”

If we interpret that correctly, it means that the Third Side of equal rights limits its role during the negotiations by declaring in advance that it would support a probable consensus between the MSZMP and the Opposition Roundtable and that it wishes to become an active participant in this process, that is, it wishes to facilitate the consensus. That is to say, it does not wish to disagree if the other two sides agree. Which of course does not exclude the theoretical possibility of the Third Side to formulate its separate opinion, as it is the case now. This is how we interpret the agreement.

**Magda Kósáné Kovács:** I am very sorry that we have an opportunity to hear this unusual interpretation only at this stage of the negotiations, because if the Third Side had been familiar with it at the time of signing the initial agreement, we would not be sitting here now. The initial agreement mentions three negotiating partners of equal rights. The argumentation of Doctor Szabad is familiar to me: there are equals, but among equals there are some who are more equal than the others. If two of the negotiating partners are more equal than the third, than it is not equal partners sitting at the table. [...] The Third Side has exercised the quoted self-moderation in the case of a number of issues. Whenever its separate opinion would have hindered the advancement of the negotiations, the Third Side either gave up its separate opinion or declared itself unconcerned. We insist, however, that – provided that there are three partners of equal rights negotiating – the Third Side should have the right to present its views to the Full Session in issues affecting the existence and the future of its constituent organizations.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Honoured Negotiating Partners! I would like to present a compromise proposal. We accept the principle suggested by the Opposition Roundtable and the Third Side that party organizations can not operate at workplaces, educational institutions and places of service. At the same time, the workers of the restricted areas would be allowed to organize party units outside of their workplaces, places of service, etc. – the list would obviously coincide with the one mentioned above – that is to say, they would be allowed to organize units where they live and at suitable civil meeting places.

The MSZMP would, however, like to ask for some time to be able to implement this principle in practice. None of the negotiating partners may expect the MSZMP to destroy its own units. Therefore our proposal is the following: at the Constitutional Court and other courts the resolution should be implemented at the moment the law enters into force; at state administration workplaces and in the system of state administration it should be implemented by December 31 this year [1989]; at all other workplaces – apart from armed forces and bodies – by July 1, 1990; and in the army, that is, in armed forces and armed bodies by December 31, 1990. Please accept these deadlines and consider our agreement in principle.

**Imre Boross:** We ask for a two-minute break to preserve this tradition.

[...]

Document 63.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 29, 1989.*





**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
August 29, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**József Antall:** ... I believe the present negotiations themselves prove – and I want to call attention to it again – that only a global agreement is possible with the other party, not a package but a global agreement, and I think everybody is aware of this. So the partial results we have achieved in the past few days will manifest in the framework of a global agreement and will be enforced in a global agreement. As a result, all we have made on the issue of the president was a preliminary compromise proposal in order to restore the unity of the Roundtable, because as long as the issue of the office of the president is not settled, as long as we cannot resolve the question of the institution of presidency, we cannot talk about the unity of the Roundtable.

[...] the Ministry of Justice [...] intends to include elements of a presidential republic into the Hungarian constitution [...] which does not match Hungarian constitutionality at all. [...] I still suggest that in this extraordinary situation we are in now – and we will be in after the parliamentary elections – we should consider the one time direct election of the president, for the following reasons. The present Parliament should not be given a chance to elect a president, in case the view of those wins out who want to advance the time of the election of the president, because the legitimacy of this Parliament has been questioned obviously by the opposition as well, and it would not be accepted by the other party either, because they would not want to have a president in office who was elected by a parliament with reduced legitimacy.

[...] So I don't think it is a bad solution if for the first time – and it would be codified this way in the constitution – we would consider the possibility of direct election. All the more so because it could make sure that our whole conception of the presidency will be accepted. The question as to when the president should be elected, whether before or after the parliamentary elections, or at the same time of the elections, is an issue on which we would not want to take up any inflexible position.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** ... I'm surprised at József Antall saying that the legitimacy gap in Hungary can not be resolved by any other way, but by a directly elected president. I believe that by this move we would radically break off with the long standing Hungarian traditions, the traditions of parliamentarianism, and we would step on a dangerous route which ... we could say though that the next parliament will ... it was just a temporary thing, and the next parliament can fix it – for it includes that the president was elected directly only once –, but it was just József Antall who said we did not have an authorization to make decisions for the period of time after the elections...

[...]

**Sándor Keresztes:** ... we have always endorsed the direct election of the president. In 1946 too our party, when it was in Parliament and the institution of the republic was introduced, the only single objection we had was that the Parliament elected the president

rather than the people. We objected to it all the more so because the parties had not questioned the person to be elected president, neither the constitutional form of the country, and thus the will of the people could not be manifested.

We also agree with the formulation concerning the jurisdiction of the president of the republic. Let me refer to the fact that the so-called very weak president who would perform mere protocol functions – presenting awards, inaugurating bridges when cutting the ribbon – does not correspond at all to the interests of our nation. And it does not work in general either, for the example of France clearly shows after the Second World War, when democratic order got into a serious crisis, that the situation almost demanded a strong hand, that of De Gaulle, and that was how the presidential jurisdiction took shape. [...] Though this is not what we want, but a president with a kind of intermediate power who has some role to play in public life and law is absolutely necessary. [...] All the more so, because it can give significant guarantees for the transition period so that the transition can reach its goal, the establishment of the Hungarian pluralist, democratic constitutional state. Therefore we would like to set the time of the presidential elections earlier than the parliamentary elections.

[...]

**Károly Vigh:** I want to start by saying that there is a strong relationship between the office of the president of the republic and Hungary's international status. Especially in the past couple of months we have witnessed extraordinary interest in this issue on the part of respected statesmen and politicians. And this is no accident. Now, we can see for instance in Poland at present that even the radical reforms and changes which have taken place in the last couple of days and weeks have not fully satisfied leading politicians of certain significant powers in the world, and they expect further results for the democratic transition in Poland. Not to speak of Hungary.

[...]

**Imre Boross:** I will try to spell out our opinion briefly. I think these days there is nothing else our country wishes more than to have stability. This stability, I believe, can be provided by two institutions. On the one hand by the new Parliament, and on the other by clarifying the issues concerning the office of the president and by the election of the president. I don't think that the public can be kept in a state of strained emotions for long. If we want to elect a new Parliament and the president only after a long period of time – we wait another half a year, or three quarters of a year, or a full year – then people will get tired of this kind of policy...

The international financial world, the international political circles can only have confidence in us if we achieve stabilization both politically and economically, including – of course – our institutions.

Therefore I must say that after thorough considerations, taking into account a number of possible worries and the ideas which undoubtedly do not make this solution free from problems, we think we should join here the proposal made by the Christian Democratic Party.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... When formulating its position FIDESZ considered the following aspects. We all know that we were authorized to conduct these negotiations by nobody else but by our members. [...] However, until this issue – the issue of the president – came up we had been in a simple situation... [...] We could think that what we represented here coincided with the interests of the vast majority of Hungarian society. We had no doubts about it, for if we had had, we would never have sat down to this table. That's the way we have thought about this issue up to now. We believe that it is possible to protect the interests of Hungarian society in one single question without any worries, and this issue is that of the elections. We have to have clean, free and equal elections, based on a multiparty system. This much, in my view, has already been accomplished.

Now that's why we have to examine the scope of authorization of this whole Roundtable – and this is not only my view, for I believe it concerns other organizations, too. [...] We believe that only the newly elected Parliament is entitled to introduce a significant constitutional institution like the office of the president. I don't mean the election of the president here – I stress again – but the specification of the institution itself. For us the question is not who will elect and how the president will be elected. The question for us is who will define the institution. I believe only a free Parliament that has been elected in the course of legal, free elections can have the right to codify an institution like this, this Roundtable simply does not have a mandate to do so. [...] So if we were to decide now to establish the the office of the president before the elections. This we could not endorse, and we would vote against it.

**József Antall:** By veto?

**Viktor Orbán:** Yes, by veto. Of course.

[...]

**József Antall:** ... What has been raised by Viktor Orbán, as to how far our authorization goes, has made me reconsider my own position as well, only in a different way. What he says is true that the Hungarian nation has not authorized us, one moment ... has not entitled us to facilitate the elections by creating or modifying the the office of the president, we should promote the elections without doing it [...]. Therefore we have only one option left, if any, the direct election of the president before the parliamentary elections. [...]

We have managed to reach consensus that the institution of the office of the president should be established, because we can take the responsibility with clean conscience for the future generations of our history that we have demolished the people's republic, the Presidential Council, we have eliminated the law which changed by force the republican constitution of the country created by former parliaments. We can stand clean before history for having turned this course back and reestablished a constitutional state of parliamentary democracy. We can take responsibility for that. An we can also safely say that this Parliament should make a provisional law for the one time filling of this position, on the basis of which, if they so wish, they can call the presidential elections, for according to your logic we do not have authorization to do that, you can put it this way. [...]

If we cannot agree today, then the Roundtable is finished, because we can not sit down at the table tomorrow with a uniform position of the Roundtable.

[...]

**János Kis:** ... Above all I want to say that since there is a real stalemate situation here, all of us should show extraordinary restraint and patience so that we can overcome this situation together [...] Historically the situation is that the Opposition Roundtable already had a resolution which were then vetoed by three member organizations. I don't want to address criticism to anyone for this now, I start out from the conviction that everybody made a decision starting out from their own political faith and the responsibility they feel for the nation ... [...]

One option is indeed what József Antall specified, but it is not sure that we should dramatize it to such an extent. [...] I can imagine that the Roundtable simply states that there is no consensus in this issue, and it maintains the intention to agree with the other party on all the matters in which it has a uniform view, and insists that that the other party should submit any proposal to the Parliament after an agreement has been achieved. I have to add that MSZMP has already indicated in the form of passing hints given informally that it would prefer this solution in case there were issues in which we do not have a common view. And then what would happen is that those in the Roundtable who agree with the bill submitted to the Parliament by MSZMP this way would be satisfied, and those who do not would be dissatisfied but could say that they do not have to assume responsibility for it, and we can of course agree to make it public what the dispute was all about, but ... the dispute would take place in a civilized fashion.

[...]

**László Bruszt:** ... It is the strategy of MSZMP that has changed. Its original strategy presumably was built on their own earlier, first conception of the elections, which has been changed fundamentally by the elections taking place in the meantime and also by the forecasts for the new elections. Two things become clear as a result.

One is that the popularity of MSZMP as a party is constantly collapsing, and the later the elections take place, the less chance MSZMP has – at least in its present form – to win even relative majority in the new Parliament. So there is even a danger for MSZMP to end up being a minority, but on the other hand the popularity of one of its leaders, Imre Pozsgay is constantly increasing. This is the situation I believe – but maybe there are other aspects of it – that resulted in fundamental changes in their negotiating strategy.

Following this change of strategy the former uniform position of the Roundtable has broken up; it is obvious that it was not a matter of unprincipled compromises but rather a different evaluation of the new situation, and the different parties viewed the conditions of stabilization in a different way.

[...]

**Miklós Haraszti:** ... we all know where this whole plan comes from, it is connected to Imre Pozsgay, it is his plan, it was originally prepared by his constitutional lawyers, and even if it had come up in the mind of others in principle that a strong hand, a strong and popular hand could play a role in smoothing out the wrinkles of the transition to democracy and in reassuring the people, it used to be, it is now and it will always be connected to the person of Pozsgay. [...] He is the presidential candidate of the communist party, but he also appears as the leader of the election campaign of the communist party, not only as its presidential candidate, so in Germany for instance he referred to the Forum as a potential coalition partner, consequently he is the leader of the party's campaign.

[...]

**József Antall:** ... It has never been part of any kind of a resolution in the Democratic Forum whether we would or would not support Imre Pozsgay, and the whole issue has never been brought up within the Democratic Forum, not to speak of its discussions with other organizations. I can responsibly state that, but it does not belong here, and it cannot be ... of this question ... – no matter how much it intrigues the fantasy of some people now – it does not belong here, so we cannot say anything in this matter.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... The moment we start arguing about the time of electing the president and about his future power – and I could now go on like this – we lose the possibility to formulate a clear, principled position. [...] So if the Opposition Roundtable decides now to start a dispute like this, we have to know that we will never be able to go back to the position which recognizes that we simply do not have authorization to discuss such matters. [...] we will never endorse a decision which could result in the election of a communist president.

[...]

**Tibor Füzessy:** ... The Polish example is interesting because I believe it derives from the recognition of a reality that can be summarized in short by saying that power should be divided in a way that is acceptable to the whole world, and to the whole Polish nation. And I think the result of this considerations is that the polish have come to this view of dividing powers after having won the elections after a lengthy fight, and essentially what they have achieved was that your is the president, ours is the prime minister.

[...]

**Csaba Varga:** ... The way we have evaluated it is that MSZMP has long ceased to exist. There are two or three marked forces in it, that's why there is no uniform opinion within the party. I would think that it would be inaccurate or superficial to talk about it like that. From this it follows that the candidacy of Pozsgay, we believe, means that he has been bowled out of the leadership of MSZMP in the course of the struggle for power. Nominating Pozsgay is in the interest of MSZMP – in the interest of one wing of it – so that he could not become the president of the party, or the president of the party's successor. [...] I don't believe what they want to achieve by nominating whatever candidate is to maintain some kind of a Stalinist dictatorship in Hungary.

[...]

**János Kis:** ... again and again we can hear the claim that one of the parties has arguments of real policy, while the other is just flying its principles in the air. [...] One argument is related to the political stability of the transition. It has nothing to do with the issue whether the president should be a communist or not. The other argument is that even the communist must be given something. This has nothing to do with the question whether the transition is stable or not. The third argument involves what the Soviets, the leaders of the

Soviet Union can, are willing to accept, the fourth argument concerns what the heads of government all over the world think, and finally the Polish analogy. As for the issue of a communist head of state, I then said – and I maintain this opinion even today – I can imagine a constellation after the elections in which we would say to the communists “OK, you can have the president, but ours is the prime minister”, but it’s not worth giving them the president in advance, because then we wouldn’t have this opportunity for a bargain, the deal would then have to be made under much worse circumstances...

[...]

**Károly Vigh:** ... The issue of the institution of presidency is partly a question of a political deal for MSZMP. In case you didn’t know that before, then you should be aware of it now. Now, if it always has been a matter of a political deal, and it has ceased to be a matter of a political deal on the part of the Opposition Roundtable, then we have to consider what MSZMP will say if they learn about what has happened here. So this would support ... (*György Szabad: They already know it.*) The majority, perhaps we could have a majority vote, and then we could requalify veto as a neutral position.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Let me ask a question. So on its part the Democratic Forum is ready to accept the Act I of 1946 as it is, that is, a president elected by the Parliament with the specified powers there, as it is now, without any modifications? That’s what I want to know.

**József Antall:** Supplemented by the office of commander-in-chief of the army, for I think that was behind your shrewd question, but the Supervisory Committee of the Allied Forces did not agree to include it into Act I of 1946 in an explicit way, so it contains a confused, vague formulation of this military issue. I usually read what I propose. So it is Act I of 1946, but it has to include reference to the commander-in-chief of the army, in a way that you mentioned it, and automatically the counter-signature of the minister, etc.

[...]

**József Antall:** If this Parliament elects [the president], say – I don’t think this will happen, but let’s suppose so. So I don’t think they will accept it like that, but in case they do, then it will elect the president for four years, because it is just not possible to elect a president for two years, for then a completely new solution should obviously be worked out for that, but the next Parliament might as well question it. [...]

**János Kis:** Then there’s a misunderstanding between us. I did say it, but it seems to have got lost somehow when I said it. This Parliament, in my view, can only elect an interim president for the transition period.

**József Antall:** Well, then we are back there, then we should withdraw the whole thing and start it all over again. It is annul. For there is absolutely no point in electing an interim president... [...]

**József Antall:** ... One thing could be done now, we could say – if it is endorsed by FIDESZ and all the other parties – we could say that the institution of presidency will be included in the amendment of the constitution in the sense and form of Act I of 1946 – this can be achieved by some modification, if it is necessary – with a clause specifying that only the new Parliament is entitled to elect the first president of the republic, and until it happens, the I/1946 – I don't remember the paragraph precisely – the office of the president will be filled provisionally by the Speaker of the House.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** If I understand it well, from this it follows that this kind of a decision practically does not bind the new Parliament to anything, so it does not extend beyond the period which is concluded by the election of the new Parliament. Do I see it the right way? So we are not going to make a decision which goes beyond the ... of the new Parliament...

[...]

**György Szabád:** It extends beyond it only as long as the new Parliament makes a new decision. But it is in harmony with our basic statement that we will not create a situation that is settled...

[...]

**István Gaskó:** In regard to the fact that this alternative satisfies two important conditions of the position of the Social Democratic Party on two fundamental issues, as to which we do not elect the president before the parliamentary elections, and the president must be elected by the Parliament, I think this version is more acceptable than the first one submitted by SZDSZ.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Well, SZDSZ can fully endorse this proposal.

**Tibor Füzessy:** Gaskó was right in highlighting the two aspects which – I think it is more likely now – make it impossible for the Christian democrats to accept this proposal.

[...]

**Csaba Varga:** On the basis of this discussion I think it is quite clear how the compromise may look, in version "A" and version "B". "A" includes this clause, "B" does not. It is clear, I believe, what is meant by without the clause, and you will decide before one o'clock tomorrow what you propose. That's all I can say now.

**János Kis:** Excuse me, if you say it without the clause, then we can only accept it with another clause which needs to be discussed, which takes the election to be provisional, because this Parliament can not elect a president for four years, only for the transition period. The first thing to do for the new Parliament should be the election of the president. It will either strengthen the old one in his position, or it will just send him home.

**Csaba Varga:** We will think it over until one o'clock tomorrow, right? Because it has to be considered.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** We veto it – I will announce a veto if things are like that. This no longer conforms to what we ...

**János Kis:** Then we also abandon it and stick with ...

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The best would be ... the Antall solution.

**István Gaskó:** Yes, that solution, with the clause, is good.

**József Antall:** Yes, but this solution with the clause is not accepted by the Christian People's Party, and it is not accepted by the ...

**Csaba Varga:** Unfortunately I – more precisely the presidency of the People's Party – cannot accept.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** Two kinds of proposals have been presented here. One turned out unacceptable to the free democrats, the Social Democratic Party, the League and FIDESZ. This is the one which took the first eight hours of discussion. It is a possibility which should somehow be modified, it seems, but the point is that there will always be at least one of these organizations which can not endorse the proposal put forward in the first half of our discussion. So I'm quite convinced that it won't work.

Then, with respect to it, another direction has taken shape in our talk – I just try to give a summary of it – in which the votes look like this: two organization put a veto, or two organizations cannot accept the proposal which was submitted by MDF for the seventy seventh time. With respect to this proposal one organization – ours – could say that most likely we will be able to accept it, but a sure decision can only be made tomorrow morning, another two organizations could say they might be able to decide on it tomorrow morning, but their decision will most likely be not favorable to a possible compromise. That's where we are now, if I evaluate the situation correctly. I just took the liberty to ... so that it should be clear.

Now, my proposal is that, though the phone calls tomorrow make sense, and everybody who is undecided should keep calling tomorrow, but let's perhaps try to find a solution that we commit ourselves to come to the five o'clock meeting at half past four. (*Several: By four.*) Then let's come by four...

[...]

**György Szabad:** Let me propose in one sentence that all those who say no to this compromise solution tomorrow should put down in writing their counter-proposal by four o'clock, including what statement the Opposition Roundtable should make at the intermediate-level negotiations tomorrow. (*Approval.*)

[...]



Document 64.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 30, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**  
August 30, 1989  
(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Magda Kósáné Kovács:** [...] The presidium of SZOT is sorry to realize that the negotiations concerning economic issues which are very important for the trade unions have not passed the level of special committees yet, and there is hardly any hope that the debates would result in an agreement codified in normative laws.

The presidium of SZOT considers it even more problematic that the political conciliation talks are becoming an exclusively inter-party forum. The Third Side has no chance of asserting its standpoint concerning a lot of issues, for instance the new election law which should provide an opportunity for certain civil organizations to take part in the elections. Debates have turned sour especially in connection with the right to put up candidates – the Opposition Roundtable and the MSZMP only acknowledges the right of the parties to do so. All this *per se* does not cause the trade unions to draw a final conclusion in respect of their taking part in the negotiations. But the fact that the Opposition Roundtable has questioned publicly that the Third Side is an equal partner in the negotiations making it impossible to reach a proper trilateral consensus does lead to serious concern. The Third Side has unfortunately become isolated in the debate concerning this issue.

The presidium of SZOT would like to express its utmost concern in respect of the fact that the representatives of civil organizations are denied the right to actually participate in molding the future. The presidium is of the opinion that a considerable part of the labor force will be left out from the process of creating the political and economic conditions of a peaceful transition.

The delegation of the trade unions, seemingly representing organizations with obligations but without any real rights, would not like to participate in the activities of the Political Conciliation Committee. For this reason the presidium of SZOT suspends its delegation immediately and will turn to the plenary session of the SZOT to be held next Wednesday with a proposal to permanently suspend the mandate of the delegation after careful consideration of the circumstances.” [sic! – Trans.]

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** [...] Most probably all those present remember that two sessions ago the delegation of the Opposition Roundtable has asked the delegation of the MSZMP, or rather its leaders to be exact, to intercede on behalf of the two young members of the opposition taken into custody in Prague. Since it has been done successfully, the Opposition Roundtable feels obliged now to express its gratitude to Mr Pozsgay, Minister of State, for his personal intercession. We feel obliged to do so especially because regardless of the political differences between us, in this case the affair of the two young members under arrest of the opposition was considered a national issue. For this we especially owe our thanks to you. Thank you.

[...]

**István Somogyvári:** [...] I would like to suggest that the honoured committee should first talk about the president of the republic and then turn to other debated issues of various significance. Concerning the president of the republic the sides hold the following positions. The MSZMP considers it necessary for the peaceful transition that as soon as possible, perhaps this year already, if possible, but by all means prior to the parliamentary elections, that the function of the president of the republic should be introduced in order to provide a political office, in this period burdened with a crisis of confidence, which would be the embodiment of public trust on the one hand. On the other hand, the head of state authorized by the law should control and arrange the parliamentary elections and have the responsibility of dealing with the tasks in connection with forming a – most probably – coalition government afterwards. [...]

The MSZMP's position is that the office of the president of the republic should be created this year by the Parliament with a claim for permanence, that is, concerning its scope of authorities it should make it a fundamental institution of the new Hungarian socialist or democratic constitutional state for a long time to come. The people themselves should elect the president of the republic directly to provide the necessary legitimacy in a period burdened with – and I have to put great emphasis on this – crisis of confidence.

And finally, the MSZMP is of the opinion that the authorities of the head of state should be somewhere in the middle of the two extremes apparent in various constitutions of the world – it should neither be of the representational kind, or of the presidential type. Rather, his responsibilities should enable him to correct functional disorders that occur between the parliament and the government, but at the same time it should also be constitutionally guaranteed that the head of state could not take control of other branches of power, that is, of the government or of the parliament.

[...]

**József Antall:** Honoured Speaker, honoured participants! The Opposition Roundtable can not accept the office of the president of the republic and its scope of authorities as proposed by the MSZMP in the framework of a possible amendment of the Constitution. Therefore, we have taken the position that concerning this issue we would not like to participate in detailed negotiations in special committee I/1. since the creation of the office of the president of the republic and his election should be a task of the new parliament after the parliamentary elections. As a temporary solution we have suggested that [the Speaker] of Parliament should be given the authorities of a temporary head of state. [...]

Now, taking into account the new positions held by certain organizations of the Opposition Roundtable and the generally outlined approach of the other two sides to constitutional law, and in view of the process of negotiations we would like to make the following proposal:

1. We suggest that the function of the head of state, of the president of the republic should be included in the amended Constitution, that is, the function of the president itself should be included.
2. The function of the president of the republic as contained in the proposed amendment should correspond in its concept, in its essence, to what is stated in Act I of 1946, and it should be based upon its text and dispositions;

- a) amending section 11(2) of Act I of 1946 to include the authority of Commander in Chief of the army along with the guarantees provided elsewhere; [...]
  - b) in addition, with the insertion of a clause including that the election to office would happen after the parliamentary elections;
  - c) and, until then, that is, until the election of the president, on the basis of sections (2) and (3) of Act I of 1946 through the extension of their time limits, the Speaker of Parliament should exercise the powers of the head of state.
3. The fine details of this issue from now on should be worked out and agreed upon in special committee I/1.

This means that on the basis of Act I of 1946, we are in favor of the concept of the office of the president of the republic where he is the head of the executive branch, and in relation to the ministerial governance expressed in Act III of 1848, he exercises his powers through the government.

With all this we try to insist upon the Hungarian political tradition including ministerial governance – with ministerial counter-balance – and we consider the introduction of the office of the president of the republic in connection with to be quite necessary. It was made explicit in Act I of 1946. Hungarian law at the same time is the creation of Hungarian constitutionalism and political continuity which was annulled by the shift from democracy to autocracy in 1949.

[...]

**Imre Nagy:** [...] I would like to welcome the intention of the Opposition Roundtable to find a compromise in this issue, we also appreciate the intention to arrive at a viable compromise by going back to our historical traditions, and we are welcoming the approach which allows the other two sides to study the proposal carefully. Therefore I would like to suggest that in this issue we should accept the latter suggestion of the Opposition Roundtable that allows the other two sides to examine the proposal, and then let us go on with the discussion of this issue later.

[...]

**István Somogyvári:** The next issue is the necessity of the introduction of the constitutional court. The position of the MSZMP is that the introduction of the constitutional court should happen now, in the period of political transition, since we might take a significant step in the direction of the constitutional state if the experts' proposal on amendments to the Constitution is accepted – resulting in a Hungarian Constitution that does deserve the protection of the CC. It has not been debated by the sides that an institution is needed to protect the Constitution. We would like to suggest again that this institution, that is, the Constitutional Court, should be set up by the Parliament right away, and it should start working as well, since there are quite a few anomalies in our legal system which must be done away with as soon as possible.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The opinion of the Opposition Roundtable, as we have stated it several times, is that the introduction of the constitutional court is not an issue that would have a great significance in the period of transition; at the same time it might be doubtful to create this institution in a period when the legitimacy of Parliament itself is debated,

irrespective of what authority this institution would have. Thus, the Opposition Roundtable maintains its former position that the introduction of this political institution is not necessary at the moment. Of course, in the spirit of the global approach the Opposition Roundtable has always had, we are more than willing to further discuss this issue or any other issue.

[...]

**György Drucker:** The standpoint of the Third Side in the special committee concerning this issue has been that the introduction and the running of the constitutional court would entail such an extensive modification of the structure of the state organization that could only be defined as a task of a new Parliament [...] we are ready to discuss the constitutional court to be set up at a later stage.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** [...] The initial view and theoretical consideration of the MSZMP concerning this issue has been that there would be amendments of the Constitution of such a significance still enacted during the sessions of the present parliament that they would bring about a new situation in relation to the institutions of political guarantees as well. Please, keep this in mind when we start the discussions again. I believe the useful thing to do would be referring back to the meetings of the special committee in this case as well.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Considering the measures that have been made so far in relation to the Workers' Militia, that is, the declaration in relevant pieces of legislation that the connection to the party state is completely and finally cut and the organization is handed over as it is to the government, the delegation of the MSZMP is now suggesting that this organization should be integrated into the army; it should be run according to rules which are similar to the rules governing National Guards in other countries, and its ties with the party should be severed to the extent that members of any political party could join it, and its symbols – its uniform, for example – should be changed and modified to fit this new role and function.

[...]

**Károly Vigh:** [...] In relation to the Workers' Militia I would like to note once again that the historical circumstances of setting up the Workers' Militia after the 1956 revolutionary uprising should also be considered. The reasons for creating it then provided by the state- and party-leadership are now non-existent, even according to the MSZMP. So, after the re-burial of Imre Nagy, after a lot of rehabilitations, when we are in the middle of taking apart the party state, in the middle of a democratic process, we believe – and I would like to point this out in advance, I do not want to start a serious debate now – that in this form the Workers' Militia, obviously, can not have any function. Concerning the proposal that the Workers' Militia should be integrated into the army – in that written proposal we would like to be able to see what the function of the Workers' Militia would be according to the MSZMP, that is, what function would the

Workers' Militia have within the army, since this is not irrelevant in formulating our position. Briefly, this is the standpoint of the Opposition Roundtable.

**Mr Speaker:** Would anyone else from the Opposition Roundtable like to speak?

**Csaba Varga:** Yes, I would like to let Péter Tölgyessy talk.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I would like to add something to what Károly Vigh said. In the written material he referred to we would also like to see the subordination structure, the defined authority of using this force (who can give orders to use this organization?), the detailed description of the function, and we also think that the time schedule of this transformation is quite important as well. Thank you.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** As it is generally known, the Opposition Roundtable has strongly objected to leaving any adjectives in the Constitution that would refer to state socialism. Nevertheless the Opposition Roundtable would like to make a compromise proposal along the following lines:

We suggest that the expression „socialist” should be omitted from the first paragraph of Section 2 of the new text of the Constitution, but at the same time, a new pre-ambule should be attached to the Constitution that would include the social values accepted and nurtured by the Hungarian Republic. Values that have proved to be fundamental through the advance of mankind, social, solidaristic, or indeed, socialist values among them. I would like to read out the proposed text – of course we will have to discuss it in detail in the committee. „The Hungarian Republic is an independent constitutional state reviving the European and Hungarian democratic traditions. It guarantees all human rights. It tolerates all individual, religious and humanistic, civic and socialist pursuits that respect those rights.”

[...]

**Imre Nagy:** The Third Side believes that the proposal made by the Opposition Roundtable after voicing the initial principles is suitable for discussion, and we suggest that we should put it up for debate – as proposed – in the relevant special committee.

**The Speaker:** On behalf of the MSZMP, Imre Pozsgay would like to speak.

**Imre Pozsgay:** We accept Imre Nagy's suggestion, that is, that we should refer the issue back to the special committee, but I would like to state now that the proposal just made does not come nearer to the MSZMP's position at all, and does not take into account what has just been expounded by our experts' committee, according to which the expression that refers to the form of the independent democratic and socialist constitutional state does not prevent anybody from pursuing other political goals, or from paving the way for other systems of state and society.

[...]





Document 65.  
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Executive Committee.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*August 31, 1989.*



## Meeting of the MSZMP Political Executive Committee

August 31, 1989

Verbatim Record of Minutes

[Subject:] **Report on the political conciliatory negotiations**

**Imre Pozsgay:** Dear comrades, I would not like to give you a detailed report on what has been going on at the political conciliation talks, since in the framework of a previously held almost all-inclusive political debate on domestic politics at our session there was ample opportunity to get the necessary information and we also got acquainted with the proceeding of the talks, and since then the press has been covering these events in a more or less detailed, if sometimes biased fashion.

Thus, if you do not mind, I would like to inform you mainly on the present stage of the talks and the experience in connection with it, and on the issues to be decided on tomorrow at the session of the Central Committee. Together with comrade Fejti, who is there with me during these negotiations, we can give you a detailed answer to any question you might raise. After last week's stamina when the talks were resumed on the medium level, the events of this week, well, this week the advance was palpable not only at the negotiations, but also in the escalation of emotions around them. Due to certain problems of information and communication the participants and also some of the party members joined the show as if starting to watch a movie in the middle, and if the reporting of the events is *eo ipso* easy to misunderstand, then the uninformed audience adds to the confusion with their own speculations. But it would be a mistake to blame either the membership of the party or the public for this. This is a logical result of the political situation we are all part of now.

I am just saying this because it is well known to the members of the Executive Committee that in respect of a particular issue – the issue of places where parties can operate – a debate has sprung up which is going on publicly, and which also mirrors the differences of opinions among the leaders of the party. For the reason that at the political conciliation talks – among other ideas and agreements – an option also surfaced in the form of a preliminary agreement not yet finalized and endorsed that the party units would leave the workplaces without necessarily ceasing to be characterized by their institutional or workplace-oriented activities which they could continue at other places; but I would like to come back to this later, because we also have to make a decision concerning this issue. I only mentioned it to illustrate that the head of the delegation, that is, basically myself, is responsible for this situation, so I have to take the responsibility for this primarily during the debate as well, and I am in the focus of the attention and criticism as well. I will perhaps try to indicate what preliminary agreements and results lead to this consequence for our delegation. But I had to realize the bitter fact that in certain circles of the party the psychological pre-conditions of understanding the complicated situation of the negotiating sides are lacking, and the head of our delegation had to experience several bad signs, from disavowals to the evaporation of the support of the hinterland for those fighting in the first line. I just wanted to add these personal remarks to the picture in brackets.

Turning to the main point – agreement has been reached concerning a very significant question, that is, the electoral law. And since these deals in the background sometimes come about through informal channels, through negotiations of the experts, the public usually does not even know that in certain cases agreements are reached in an

interconnected, or in tie-in type, or there are some agreements concerning a package of issues.

I would like to share my political experience and views on the electoral law now. First of all I would like to point out that in my opinion, time is now working against us even more than it used to, and the tendency is that, well, the negotiating position of the delegation of the MSZMP is getting more and more fragile, and that of the opposition's is getting better in this situation. It does not depend on the delegation itself, but rather on the general developments and events that have been happening in society, on the existing situation. To a great extent, this is what should determine our attitudes and decisions. The political experience in connection with this is that part of the membership and the leadership of the party is not aware of the fact that the decisions do not only depend on us any more. This phase is over now; it is not impossible to reverse it, but it would be outside the methods of negotiating, it would belong to another category altogether. Our starting point can and must be that we negotiate. Negotiating considerations – if I remember correctly – originated from the fact and meant that there was a chance of peaceful transition, a switch of models also desired and supported by the MSZMP.

Therefore, the ones who negotiate can only think in concepts of dialogue, and in categories of negotiation; I repeat that they could create another kind of political situation as well, but it would have to be considered and weighed separately. In this respect the most important thing to keep in mind is the strategic goal and the possible gain, if it is all about sharing. I would not like to repeat my views formulated at political seminars since we were all brought up in the same school, but I would at least point out in addition that all through the negotiations the opposition's opinion has been that the people are against the MSZMP. They do not feel that the people are in support of them yet, and so this is our chance at the negotiations that they do not feel that way yet, but we can say that the basis of their attitude at the negotiations is that the people are against the MSZMP. There is no need to investigate too much to find this out, since they are voicing it in public as much as they can, and they are also spreading it with the help of the means of communication at their disposal.

So I am asking you to try and picture our negotiating position and the deals or – to put it nicely – agreements we achieve there with this background and in this context. This is what determines our election tactics including – without any machiavellism – a rational calculation of tools and preferences to apply in dividing the opposition. In respect of this, the delegation has reached the conclusion that in this tactical framework the historical parties can be our tactical allies, like the social democrats – if only they had organized themselves already –, and the rest of the historical parties including the Christian democrats, but excluding other types of organizations. And so when a bargain situation comes about, they should be preferred in the decision.

I would also like to tell you in connection with this that in this way we have succeeded in putting together the election bill. That is, its basic principles and the political deal underlying it. Concerning this issue we acted in the spirit of the authorization we received at the last session almost to the last letter of it when we tried to find our options. The limits set were not crossed by the delegation. The significant thing in this is that we managed to defend our position that in the case of a two-round election, the candidates who reach 15% in the first round would be granted entry in the second round, because according to current positions, no one would get into an election alliance with us for the second round, and if we do not have a partner, then the MSZMP will not have a chance to participate in the second round of the parliamentary elections,

and as a result, would also lose the opportunity of acquiring a couple of mandates from the national list as determined by the distribution of the fraction votes. So this has been one of the debated points where we managed – with the help of supporters within the opposition – to defend and accomplish what we wanted. As you know, and as has been proved at the interim elections, the opposition tends to enter into an election alliance in advance, also on the basis of an old piece of electoral law. Where the chance of winning is dubious for any one party, there they support the other opposition party.

The other thing is: the proportions are known to you, comrades, the newspapers have talked about the fact that this electoral law intends to create a 350-member parliament, and the division of that would be 150 members from individual constituencies, another 150 members from lists, twenty lists, Budapest and the 19 counties which is still questioned saying that maybe the smallest counties could form a region where only two or three candidates would be included in the lists. All in all I just wanted to tell you that the delegation of the MSZMP feels that in respect of the electoral bill a satisfactory compromise has been accepted and a consensus reached, and there is no political obstacle to submitting the bill now.

It means that if I we add to this the consensus that has been reached concerning the modification of the Criminal Code and of criminal procedure regulations, then we can say that in respect of three fundamental bills which are important for all the negotiating sides in terms of the security of the peaceful transition we arrived at an agreement – including a bill of public law, that is, the electoral bill.

The negotiations have been stalled at the most important points, which is quite natural – and this has been, so to say, the schedule for the negotiations as well. The delegation of the MSZMP showed some flexibility in terms of the application of the criminal procedure of the Criminal Code and of the electoral law to ensure that its position would be acceptable in the most important, decisive issue – and this had been our political intention –, that is, the modification of the Constitution. As I have said, the talks have been stalled at the party law, where in respect of two significant questions the discussion has not been brought to a close, no agreement has been reached, not to mention several minor issues. One of the main issues is the assets of the party, the other one is the authorized places of operation of party units. We have agreed on important issues like limiting the right of public meeting in certain professions, or limiting the right of joining parties in certain professions – members of the Constitutional Court and judges can not be members of any political party, and as it has been made public in a statement, no party units can operate within the armed bodies of the state. We managed to shatter the – so far – rather solid position of the opposition that besides the prohibition of the operation of party units in the armed forces and other armed bodies, their members should not be allowed to become members of political parties at all. Here they have accepted in the end that they can be party members, but the units of the parties should be operating outside the place of service. There has been a preliminary agreement concerning this as well, here, among us, too. Later I would like to talk about the deadlines separately.

The debate and the public debate concerned most of all the party units operating at workplaces, at companies, factories, state offices, schools, universities, and so on. We had received an open authorization in advance concerning this issue as well, stating that party units can not be integrated into the organizational structure at those places, and that they can not be part of the management, they can not interfere with the production process or the managerial process in firms and institutions. The other thing which I would like to point out in connection with this, and I would like to emphatically

call the attention of the honoured Executive Committee to this, is that if we hold this position and it is also accepted by the Central Committee, then the logical and legal consequence of this would be the appearance of all the other parties in companies and other institutions, and these places would become an open field of election struggles and political fights. At the same time, it would provide for the party members and the communists a comfortable feeling that they can engage in politics at the workplace and they almost have to live there, but the goal which would be really important for them in the election campaign is that the communists should be present where they live, where the voters decide who their representative will be. Nevertheless, there are serious arguments against this – from organizational and other points of views.

I just wanted to tell you about my opinion concerning this issue and about the disadvantages it would result in if we accepted this solution. But I also have to point out that 'organization' does not necessarily mean that the members of the party have to sever all ties with their party and institution, because it is allowed for party units organized on the basis of workplaces to meet and operate outside the workplaces in accordance with party rules the same way. So it does not mean that members of the party at workplaces now have to switch over and become members of the party in their constituencies. This is a significant piece of information as well, I would like to call the attention of the Executive Committee to it.

Another thing to think about is whether this is the political breaking point where we might intend to knock over the negotiations, because we have to understand on the basis of what has been happening so far at the negotiations that concerning this issue we will not be able to achieve anything else. It is still possible to apply political threats and whatever else, but so far we have not really experienced at all that the negotiating position of the opposition would be more shaky when they hear and experience definite statements of any kind. I repeat that it is a fundamental political question whether we should step out of the agreement and the negotiations at this point or do something else. There is a more significant issue still ahead of us, where the success itself would be if we were able to reach an agreement. From a European perspective, and in relation to our international affairs, and also from the perspective of the stability of the country. I can only offer my own views, but of course it will have to be decided upon by the Executive Committee or the Central Committee.

The next thing is the issue of the assets of the party. It looks like we will be able to reach a consensus without the MSZMP's throwing ashes on its head at the negotiating table, without its humiliation. But a lot of mud is being thrown at us all the time, even the morning news today, and in other forms, but this is how it goes. At the negotiating table however we do have a chance of accomplishing a fair agreement without humiliation and without giving ourselves up completely, through the mutual acceptance of certain norms. It is kind of advantageous for us, in terms of propaganda it would be difficult to criticize, and we only suffer if this agreement is turned against us in the propaganda. The starting point is that party pluralism should not cost more to the tax-paying citizens than the party state has. As I see the recent developments in our units, the attitude of our membership, it will be easy to keep to this principle. (*Nyers: Well, I have serious doubts about that.*) But I do believe so, and I will tell you what the offer is, (*Nyers: It costs a lot more.*) and what the...

**Rezső Nyers:** This is not a significant issue, this is not decisive, this is only a naive attitude. I have looked at the figures in Austria – there are a lot of channels through which the money is pulled out of the state. The state budget will feel it more than

currently, but this is not decisive, I only wanted to... (*Pozsgay: Well, I guess we would...*) We should not plaster things so much.

**Imre Pozsgay:** What they do insist upon, although it would be further discussed in a committee dealing with the press and mass communication, especially the county newspapers, but they have accepted the principle eventually that the MSZMP does not have to account for its assets – and comrade Fejti has made a statement in respect of this – to the negotiating table or the Opposition Roundtable, but rather to the Hungarian people, and the MSZMP is able and willing to do so through Parliament. A review and registration of our assets are acceptable for us in accordance with and in the spirit of the provisions of the Party Law binding on each party. In addition to this we have also stated that the MSZMP would hand over a certain part of its indispensable assets – an amount not yet specified – to the government which could provide the necessary infrastructure for the new parties from it, but it does not mean that the government must use it all for that purpose. The amount has not been specified yet, we are keeping it back at the moment, but in principle, as we talked about it last time, the amount of investments with state support since 1978 is going to be offered by us for this purpose. In connection with this I would also like to point out that we have stated that we would not agree to confiscation or nationalization of any kind even if it is based on the people's wish, since most of the assets of the MSZMP has come from legal and ethical sources, that is, membership fees, or the results of fees, which can be easily proved. At this point, by the way, we were treated a nice long lecture on the financial situation of absolutist monarchies and its legal consequences in the course of history, but it did not bother us too much from a practical point of view. I believe we can advocate, defend, and promote our position successfully as it is in this debate.

The debate has sprung up from the question of how this intention can now be realized as soon as possible, how they can get the necessary funds and finances fast. We are of the opinion that there has not been a precedent, because the parties have not been tested yet; 'equal opportunities' is a hazy and unsuitable concept, there is not one single country where the money is shared on the basis of equal chances, at most places it is the election results that determine how much state subvention the political parties and movements could get, and for this reason we have asked them to consider the assets handed over to them as an advance payment they should account for after the elections when the norms can be defined and state subvention can be divided on their basis. I repeat, concerning this issue, a harsh debate is going on, and the talks are stalled.

It is of minor significance, but it still requires a decision at the negotiations – the limitation of possible party functions to fill for members of the armed forces and bodies. In the opposition's view a big enough concession has been already made when they agreed that they could join parties at all, and so it is a reason for exclusion from all leading party functions if someone does service at one of the armed forces, it is a reason for exclusion in case of all parties if someone is a soldier or a policeman. Our position in this has been, and we do think it is acceptable, that national functions, elected leading functions should not be filled by members of the armed bodies. We can go down to the county level in this bargaining process, but it is not certain at all that we should prevent a simple policeman from becoming a member of his party leadership, especially if he has his own party unit, although outside the police.

As far as the modification of the Constitution is concerned, which we believe to be the most significant issue of the peaceful transition and the political negotiations in connection with it – well, the modification of the Constitution has been originally our

own initiative since the Central Committee of the MSZMP considered it important already in this phase of the transition to create new political institutions which are not included in the present Constitution, such as the President of the Republic, the Constitutional Court, and the State Audit Office. In order to ensure the completeness of the system of guarantees, the MSZMP has regarded this as the most fundamental question, thus, the MSZMP has urged the modification of the Constitution. A part of the opposition has also been pushing it, but mainly in issues that make it possible or easier for the new electoral law to come into force, and so on. This is what I wanted to tell you first. And I also have had authorizations concerning certain questions in this respect.

A new situation has come about concerning the issue of the president of the republic, which has been considered by the radical wing of the opposition right from the beginning of the negotiations as a made-up institution to salvage the power of the MSZMP, and consequently they have intended to prevent its being set up by all means available, going to such extremes as saying that this new institution can not even be included in the modification of the Constitution. Well, after a really hard, ten-hour debate held the day before yesterday, of which we also have some quite accurate information, of its background that is, they made a proposal yesterday that is different from their original position. The essence of its content would correspond to the historical development of Hungarian politics, to 1918 and 1946, since they basically propose to re-invent Act I of 1946 with an amendment covering the function of the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, due to the fact that back then, as the country was occupied, no one was in command of armed forces in Hungary. After studying this piece of law from 1946, we can consider the bill itself the basis of the negotiation; the discussions are stalled for reasons outside the bill, since essentially it does include the basic ingredients of the institution of the 'medium-power' president of the republic, the power of which would be limited by Parliament, as contained in a preliminary draft of the amendment of the Constitution – a compromise is possible to reach based on this, but in respect of the most significant points, there has been no advancement.

One of the significant points is: who should elect the president of the republic? The opposition insists on his election by the new Parliament, because then in all probability they would be able to elect a person from the opposition; this is why they want it that way. The other significant thing is the deadline, as I have just said – they would not like to have the president of the republic elected within this period. Please, think it over carefully whether the political position of the MSZMP has changed concerning this, whether there is a chance of compromise, and then I would also like to say something about it.

I think it would be politically acceptable for the MSZMP to set the final deadline to the time of the parliamentary elections, and maybe together with it, in the framework of a referendum, at the same occasion, but I do not think it is acceptable that Parliament should elect the president of the republic at all, because we can say then that it was no use, there was no sense in sitting down to the table. Then we have to start thinking about something else. As far as election through a referendum is concerned, the final deadline in that case should be the time of the parliamentary elections, and a clause should be enacted saying that the first president of the republic in the new republic would be elected by referendum, and then Parliament could decide later what method of election is best in the future. Anyway, the MSZMP has to 'bridge over' this period by all means. I almost regard this as unacceptable, but it has been raised as a compromise proposal in case the success of the negotiations depends on it.



Concerning the Constitutional Court we have taken a step back, because now we are saying that this political institution should be set up right away and enough members of it should be elected to make it operational without filling in all the places to provide an opportunity for the opposition as well to assign or recommend members to it after the parliamentary elections. This is, by the way, a paradox in itself, but politically it is understandable, they insist on it. It is a paradox since members of the Constitutional Court can not belong to any political party, but they will have their preferred persons in this respect all the same. All in all, the creation of this institution can be put out until the new parliamentary cycle, but it should not be offered yet.

In respect of the State Audit Office I do not know what we should do, but I think it could be set up any time, I do not know, comrade Fejti might add something to this, like what stage the talks are at now in terms of deadlines and other decisive factors.

The time of the elections is not a subject of the negotiations, but it has been in the air all along, and also in the public consciousness. Comrade Németh will probably inform us on what his experience was at the meeting of the government. Thus, here and now I would only like to share my personal opinion with you, namely, that the elections should be held until our reserves and opportunities are not exhausted. I do not think that the situation or the perspectives are pointing in the direction of improvement. So, as far as it is made possible by the legislation, by the political negotiations, and by the technicalities of holding elections, we should hold the elections as soon as possible; this is backed up by the current state of the economy, of the government, of the party, a lot of factors indeed. Against it – you might say that just before the congress and the hopefully reasonable and helpful resolutions of it, the party might have a chance to pull itself together.

What I say to this is that the party may have a greater chance of turning to society instead of turning to itself, if it fights hard in the election struggles, and if it manages to convince its membership that they have work to do in it, unlike a state-party which believes it must win anyway, but like a party which is aware of the fact that it is a matter of life and death to achieve good results at the elections. The latest possible deadline is when the term of the current Parliament is over, which is June next year. That would only be favorable for the opposition. March might be an acceptable deadline, but June or after June would only be to the advantage of the opposition, due to the fact that now the situation holds the signs of crisis, the economic problems, the narrow possibilities of the state budget – this is one side of it, but all this will not be determined at the negotiations, it is a matter of decisions to be made elsewhere.

The other thing is: what should we do if the negotiations come to a halt or are impossible to finish by the time that would still be acceptable in respect of the preparations for the September sessions of Parliament? One option that would also be welcome by the opposition is that the government submits the bills that have been politically agreed upon, and we should go on with the rest and see what happens. But the opposition would get with this what it wanted, the electoral law, the party law, and we would not get what we need, and then the obstructionist phase of the negotiations would commence, and god knows when and how it is completed.

Another thing that makes the responsibility of the government even greater is a yes-no question – whether it decides that whatever has been decided and agreed upon at the negotiations would be respected, but in topics where no agreement has been reached by the negotiating sides, the government would submit bills of its own conception.

A new political situation like that would provide quite extensive propaganda opportunities for the opposition, but it is not certain at all that this option should be

excluded from the alternatives, we have to consider this just as well; and there is also the chance of a very risky gentlemen's agreement including finishing now whatever we can, the opposition promises it will not prevent the submission of the party law for the October session and especially of the modification of the Constitution. But nothing would make the opposition keep its word, because they are a roundtable, not a party, so I think this option is way too risky to recommend.

Two options remain: we successfully finish the talks next week and as long as it is still possible, take the political gains that would be internationally meaningful as well, or the government makes the decision that we have accepted this and that, but the rest would be submitted to Parliament by the government alone.

Excuse me for making this report so long, but we still have not talked about all the complicated relations and negotiation methods that have lead to the current situation; I would like to ask the Executive Committee to support the activities of the delegation, to take sides concerning the issues requiring decisions, so that we could submit them to the Central Committee as the proposals of the Executive Committee and not as the proposals of the delegation.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** In my report I did not talk about walking out from the negotiations, since today's newspapers have gone into great detail on that, but I have something to note here. As you know, comrades, the debate heated up around the fact that the so-called third side, and within that, the trade unions especially, made the statement that they insisted on their right to run candidates at the parliamentary elections. Well, if we had accepted – and we had, and the unions had also approved of it – that we should have a one-chamber parliament, then it would be an absurd situation to have, something that would go against or even shatter the principles and workings of parliamentarism itself. It can be conceived of in the case of a two-chamber parliament, but in the case of a one-chamber parliament it can not. This is a consideration on public law – it is about the representation of political parties. And no one wanted to look down on the trade unions, but their role and function in society is something else. They could still have political weight, sometimes in a difficult situation it is even greater than that of Parliament, it has happened, no doubt about it. So it would be a contradiction. It does not exclude at all – what usually happens in the case of trade unions in the world – that they would support a party. For instance, they could support the MSZMP at the elections. It does not exclude their supporting an independent candidate in an individual constituency, bringing their point of view into Parliament that way. So much for the legal circumstances.

Another political consideration, and I would like to call the comrades' attention to this although quite a few of you might recall that at the elections in 1985, in the multi-candidate system, all candidates of the trade unions failed with a couple of exceptions, and on the national list it was also the candidate of the trade unions who received the fewest votes. If the union movement recalls this now, then – as comrade Iványi has just said – it is a logical consequence that they would start fighting for votes and making a distinction between themselves and the MSZMP, they would only take away votes from us. Thus, they would not be our ally, but rather an opponent at the elections. This is what I wanted to say, this is question of principles...

[...]

**György Fejti:** I would only like to add something briefly, because I think the evaluation of the situation just outlined by Imre Pozsgay concerning the state of affairs at the negotiations was both substantial and objective. What has been a turning point to my mind is that we have managed to agree on the electoral law, and if we had not achieved anything else, this would still be of great help in guaranteeing that the legitimacy of the new Parliament after the elections is not questioned, or at least not questioned substantially. So I think it has been a really significant step, and I also believe that we managed to accept a well-balanced bill of electoral law. It will be received well internationally. Domestic opinions on it will be divided due to the fact that there are quite a number of different ideas in circulation of what is to the advantage of this party, and what is not.

At the same time, and in fact this is why I would like to speak, in the current situation I do not see much of a chance to reach an agreement concerning all the issues we have been discussing, that is, to reach an agreement based on consensus on each and every issue. Therefore I think it is quite dangerous, it is indeed a trap to ask the question like this, 'either we agree on everything, or the talks are over'. This is not our attitude, of course, but rather that of the other side; the Opposition Roundtable is the one that usually puts things into a perspective like that, kind of forcing us into saying yes to deals which are otherwise disadvantageous to us only to avoid the responsibility for knocking the negotiations over. That is, they would love to dictate or kind of make us the victims of their blackmailing attitudes. At the same time, the objective evaluation of it, the public evaluation of it depends on the dressing to a great extent. And I think this is where we are vulnerable. Because the fact in itself that it is impossible to agree on everything is not dangerous, if the differing opinions are presented to the public objectively. Quite simply, the situation at the moment does not allow people to believe or realistically desire that an agreement would be reached concerning each and every issue. But if in the case of halting the talks the presentation of it is not successful from our side, than undoubtedly we stand up as the losers with all the implications of being the losers. So now I think the most important question is whether the negotiations are halted at a point where we can credibly prove that we have gone just as far as our interests allowed us to go.

I would also like to point out that this situation is like a trap – the whole process of the negotiations have been set in a perspective, as it has been smartly reported by the press, the representatives of the press who are present now should please excuse me now, but it favors the opposition, the perspective that whatever the opposition offers is the democratic solution, and whatever the MSZMP stands for is just the automatic tricks of preserving its position in power. But what is really happening is that every side acts as its interests are dictating it, and we are building a new democratic system together, and it is not like whatever is taken from us belongs to the people. This is the current primitive set of ideas that the opposition does not fight for its own interests but for the people's rights, and for democracy against the opposition, so... Yes? (*Pozsgay: against the MSZMP*) Against the MSZMP, that is what I meant. So this is where we should try and accomplish some changes.

And finally, it is only natural that the talks on the economy are delayed as compared to the political negotiations, but it would be in our interest to change this; and we can do it by slowing down the negotiations concerning the political transition after those four issues are agreed upon, because we do not have much of an interest in the two remaining issues, so it would be possible for us to put pressure on the Opposition

Roundtable and force them to seriously turn to the management of the economic crisis and of the social tensions.

[...]

**György Fejti:** The first thing is the question of party financing. This is the most simple one. There are three things, two of which we have basically managed to agree upon. One is the methods of financing after the elections, the current financing of parties which can be done on the basis of norms defined by Parliament in the knowledge of the election results. We have agreed on this to a hundred percent.

The second thing is the financing of the election campaign. We agreed upon that as well in essence, but not in the details. The content of our agreement is that Parliament would set up a pool of money that could be divided among the parties in the proportion of the number of candidates they are able to put up abiding by the rules set by law, although this is partly post-financing, and it is also a technical issue that the amounts could be transferred in advance. But we also thought that a limited amount should be divided up, that is, the amount should not grow with additional candidates. A limited amount to be shared among as many candidates as the parties can put up.

The third thing is, and this is where the debate is still on: what should be the tasks of Parliament and the government in creating the basic infrastructure, and this is where the question of the assets of the MSZMP has blurred the picture. Since in the other two issues the agreements have been normative, formal logic would dictate that something normative should be set up concerning the basic infrastructure as well. But this is not directly related to the assets of the MSZMP or to the freezing of those assets, or the division of them, this has been just forced into the package of topics at the negotiations. The situation got better after we seriously insisted that we do not have either political or legal obligations to account for our assets at the negotiating table, and that we are quite willing to do it somewhere else. It would improve our negotiating position a lot, as it has been already mentioned, if we managed to provide places for party headquarters in Budapest quickly enough. [...]

Nothing can explain putting a limitation in general on the right of public meeting in relation to the workplaces if the MSZMP thinks the workplaces are the most suitable place for it to exercise that right. It can be banned locally, within the institutions of power, because in this respect the various worries of the potential competitors can be understood. (*Nyers: Party units were formed at the workplaces between '45 and '48. Between '45 and '48. It was democracy then, and a constitutional state.*) Well, why are they insisting upon it. Because they know it hurts us, that is why. This is quite obvious. And they know that an evolution-type change would not mess up our organization, and this change has already started, but it is quite another thing to put them out on the street by law no later than December 31, and still another thing if we realize ourselves that the workplace is not interesting, exciting, or useful politically. Of course there is a difference between the two things. And they see that we are divided in respect of this issue, and they know that an existing debate can be intensified, it can be heated up artificially, and they know they can divert our attention with it from the issues we should otherwise be concentrating upon. The rest of their arguments in connection with this issue is just the packaging of this effort, that is what I think.

[...]

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, indeed. Any more questions? Thank you very much. First of all I would like to express my opinion concerning what is possible for us to do and what we should do in my view. I think when we talk about significant of public law we should refer back to an important principle endorsed by the previous Political Committee of the MSZMP, and to the best of my knowledge the Central Committee of the MSZMP and the government have been operating on this basis ever since, that is, that this Parliament and this government are legitimate. I would like to make this clear. Whenever we give up this principle concerning any issue, we bring grave consequences to our heads.

I just wanted to point this out because yesterday, and today again, at the meeting of our members of Parliament, the great majority of the people emphasized this again, they expressed their worries that we give up this principle, and what happens then, they can not see their role after that, and even the quite radical reformers in my group who have been attacking even the government said so, and their position was quite clear on this, they also said that we can not give up this principle at all. And all this puts a limit to the role the roundtable can play. If Parliament and the government are not legitimate, then the roundtable is completely free to do anything, and in that case if there is no agreement with the roundtable, then it means collapse, and, of course, ungovernability. But if they are legitimate and operational, which they are indeed, then it can not happen.

My conclusion from this is that the roundtable talks are very important for us, and also the submission of bills after we agree on them. It is also very important to keep our word, what we promised, that is, that legislation should not precede the agreement at the roundtable talks. But we have not signed anything that would make us give political concessions which are not right in our opinion only to secure that there is an agreement at the talks. After saying all this I would turn to the talks themselves now.

My evaluation of the talks up to this point is that it has been a successful negotiation basically, yes, indeed. It has been basically successful, of course it has been half a success, because full success is when it is over and done with, but it has been proceeding in the right direction, and results can also be anticipated. I also accept our negotiating position, our comrades have been managing the talks the right way so far. A mistake has just been made, in relation to the issue of organizing the activities of the parties at the workplace. And I think it was mainly a technical mistake, a mistake in tactics only, it has not been a divergence from our resolutions, whatever, nothing like it, just a mistake in tactics. We let this party law to be discussed first, before the modification of the Constitution, and we made certain concessions with regard to the party law in exchange for concessions in the modification of the Constitution. And we did not get the concessions, so this has been a mistake. But as I say, this is not the issue now, I just mention it as a conclusion that no, we can not negotiate like that, this has been naivety, we must not negotiate like this.

Well, now there are two issues where we have to hold our position firmly, and we have to strive to arrive at an agreement, but only if our point of view is taken into account. The first one is the issue of party activities at the workplaces. As the roundtable would prescribe it, that is, that it is not allowed from this date to maintain party units at the workplace – we just can not accept it, not only for reasons of legal doctrine, but also for political reasons, because in our current situation this is an unfair requirement which would immediately put an end to equal chances, to ruin the whole organization of a party which is at a disadvantage anyway due to its responsibility for the economic situation. And to project to the public the image of a broken, paralysed, retreating party left without any power of will before the elections. This is, dear comrades, political suicide. This is suicide, and I can not support it. But let us not over-

dramatize the situation. If we are unable to retreat from a negotiating position somehow, if the relationship between the individual and the community, the party and its negotiating partner, or between the leaders of the party is such that the community does not represent a greater force – well, then it is an incorrect relationship indeed.

After all, the individual should also sacrifice himself on the altar of the community. I say this to comrade Pozsgay. On top of all that, I am of the opinion that comrade Pozsgay can only become the president of the republic with the support of a united MSZMP, and even with that it is not absolutely certain, but at least he would have a chance, a serious chance. We have to do everything in our power to make him the president of the republic. But if the MSZMP breaks up, then no matter how many enthusiastic reformers of the intelligentsia there are, and I am one of them, I know my kind, I know who they are, no matter how enthusiastic they are, they could go to every town and village in the world, that is, in the country, but that would still not make comrade Pozsgay the president of the republic.

So I say that in two things we must be stubborn. I have read the thoughts of József Antall. On that basis, comrade Pozsgay will not become the president of the republic either. So let us be firm in that the president of the republic should be elected by referendum. And the country. And then we bargain concerning the date. I would go further than that, I would not at first agree to hold the referendum at the same time as the elections, I would hold it earlier.

The negotiations have reached a stage where we should start demanding. Everybody says so, members of Parliament, too, that we should not be in the defensive. Are we afraid of something breaking up? What the hell is breaking up? That is what I ask – what is breaking up? What are we afraid of here? I think at the moment there is nothing to be scared of, the great big democracy which is being created around the roundtable is not the great big democracy. If declarations like the one of this morning can be read on the radio, then we do not have to be scared. And the agreement with Péter Tölgyessy, well, I must admit I am not scared of breaking it up at all. Let it break up. Of course we should not intend so, but we do not have to be afraid of it if it temporarily breaks up. We are the legitimate ones, internationally we are the legitimate ones, too, yes, indeed, this country and this government is recognized as legitimate, the MSZMP is recognized as legitimate. There is no reason to be afraid. And we are getting the international support from the social democrats, and also from conservatives, they say: why do you not stand on your feet? Why are we letting this happen?

Well, now, one of the things we must stick to is the institution of the president of the republic. We have announced that we have a candidate, and we have announced that this is what we want, so let us not retreat at the roundtable. The other thing where we have to make a stand is the issue of party units at the workplace – it should not be prescribed that there could not be any, if the unit does not want to go on operating, let it dissolve; its operation can not be prohibited, it should not be possible to prohibit. It should not be possible, either. If we want to, comrade Pozsgay is right, we can also say that party organization at the workplace is not enough in itself, we are not strong enough in this way, we should go over to the regions.

I would like to add something: back in May, the question was raised..., the issue was presented by comrade Grósz with a specific date. Today, my view is, however, that we should radically switch over [to the regions], as we have discussed it here. Comrade Pozsgay is right in this sense that he did not find this out, and I agree now that we should go to the regions, we should move the stress in party activity to that area, however, we should not give up the possibility of organizing at the plants. And if a

party unit operates at a plant, nobody can say it is not dealing with voters. Are we... those workers are voters! And we want to become a people's party. I do not know if we are going to change our name..., I can be convinced about it, though, to tell you frankly, I would prefer to keep this name, because people have confidence in it. "Hungarian Socialist Party", however, is also a very nice name. If that is what we choose, I welcome the idea. We should, however, keep our worker base. That is to say, I suggest establishing a workers' section. Let us support that initiative in Debrecen, and let us make it into a national movement; and let us also establish a farmer section, which I would call "agrarian section", because we have had success in that area, and we have a base there.

The reason for changing the name "Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party" is to get closer to the agrarian layers and the intelligentsia as well, is not it? Let us establish these sections then. If we interrupt the course of things, however..., the problem is not losing a thousand or ten thousand members. We expect that a further hundred thousand are going to leave. That is not the question. I am not saying that I am not sorry for losing those members, because we will need them as voters. (*Pozsgay: Unintelligible interruption.*) I have heard it at the Budapest meeting; this issue is raised now and then. I did not say it was you, do not take it..., you should not be so sensitive, comrade Pozsgay, we are not talking about you all the time, no, it is not so, comrade Pozsgay. At that meeting it was formulated like this. They are not sorry, because those people would have left the party anyway, and what an idea it is to change our name according to such criteria. Well, the people are like that! Let us accept that, the people are like that. The people as a whole are not constituted by individuals capable of high-level theorizing. This is still important.

I would like to say another thing. We have problems with the trade unions and we should say something about it. The problem is partly objective, partly subjective. It is objective in the sense that confrontations can not be avoided. We must support the government's policy of order and structural improvement. We must. At the same time we would not wish simply to oppress the dissatisfaction of workers. The dissatisfaction of workers has its own function. The trade union leaders blowing up the dissatisfaction of the workers of a certain region or company into a national political movement, however, is already a big problem. This makes the relationship of the party and the movement and the trade union problematic.

Therefore I do not..., I have exaggerated a bit concerning this trade union problem, because I would like to raise the issue of the workers' section; I suggest that we should resolve the problem of the trade unions from a worker-perspective, and we should achieve that the trade unions, whether or not they are members of the central party organs, should operate on the basis of social partnership. It may be true that the government should pay attention to the way it formulates what is in itself correct and true, because the way we say it is important also, however, as I see it, the trade union leaders do not take care of the words they use, either, when talking about the government, but that is not all right. This is political divergence, which makes us weaker; we must strive to achieve that even if they criticize, they should do it observing the rules of political partnership and they should not organize or support political strikes. It would be necessary to formulate the position of the party in this issue as well.

Well, I think it would be reasonable tactics that we do not discontinue the negotiations. If they are to be discontinued, it should be the Opposition Roundtable that does so. We should try to achieve that some of the four laws are submitted to Parliament, indicating different opinions. There is a single issue we have to go back on

halfway or even one third, only the issue of the workplaces, maybe we should also not withdraw from the armed bodies; the judges and the rest, those are all right. On the meeting of the Central Committee – because it is the Central Committee that decides, not us – I am going to represent the position that we should not walk out, we should not accept the obligation to withdraw; at the same time, we should express our trust in the negotiating, the medium-level negotiating delegation, because I do not think this issue is about the lack of trust. And please, comrade Pozsgay, do not consider it to be one, this is rather a very uncomfortable situation, a problematic one and the party movement can not afford to do this; let us express our trust and, at the same time, in the issue concerned, let us decide that we can not support this position and we suggest further talks.

**Ilona Tatai:** [...] I would like to call your attention to the fact that there is no silent majority. The opinion of the workers is always more pronounced and usually it concerns wages. And this is a new phenomenon which is spreading like wildfire. And of course the trade union also supports wage claims [...]. Nowadays there are organizations that indicate that the decrease of life standards is already intolerable for the workers and as a result, wage claims are made and a fight for wages has started that we will hardly be able to keep at company level. That is to say, I am afraid we will not be able to resist. Just look at wage expenditures. All managers are raising pay like madmen. It is really not reasonable. We are facing claims where the question is how long they will remain in the companies, when they will go out to the street. And when a manager faces a dilemma like that, his response will be to go on increasing the wages. That is to say, there is no longer a silent majority, there is a demanding majority, and workers demand more wages today within the companies through strikes of warning of half an hour and I can not tell at which point on the street. Thank you.

[...]

**Miklós Németh:** [...] And it does not matter who organized what movement and how these are managing, that is of little importance to me, what I consider important is whether the MSZMP can approach the platforms, whether there is a lowest common multiple between the platforms that allows for an MSZMP committed to the reforms, having good organization and valuable persons to occupy a middle position and become trustworthy for society. Let me repeat: we may come to an agreement within the party, there may be discipline and order and unity, but I am concerned that if the reasonable majority does not support us, if we can not become integrated in the people, the MSZMP has no chances at the elections.

[...] The party has had the initiative, but we should accept the criticism and pronounce it – in my opinion already tomorrow – that the whole process has gone out of our hands. We did not think it over, our utterances were full of confusion. Several of you have referred to it in half sentences... let us look at what the four of us have said about this issue of whether or not the party should be there at the workplaces. When I started to think about it, I did not think it was going to become of such big importance, but one would think about it and enquire abroad... but in this room it was comrade Grósz who first mentioned that we should walk out of the workplaces, and go to the regions. I think those of us who were here then, all agreed, we did not argue. (*Nyers: Yes. That is right. It does not matter anymore but we all supported the idea.*) Yes, we supported it, and I confess I originally was a bit sceptical about this issue because I did



not think it was that important, but it unfortunately came to the foreground. I agree that the main problem is not the opposition, though it is also a problem, but the condition of the party is the main problem; we must face that; and we should resolve this problem.

[...] If there is no global agreement we must ask whether we can submit the laws in pieces; and into what pieces we should break them up; and what guarantees we can obtain that the conditions of the elections to be held the soonest possible are ensured from this respect. The government was divided in this respect, but the majority opinion was that we should hold the line.

If there is no global agreement we should submit the laws there is agreement in as they are. In the case of the others two possibilities can be weighed according to the majority opinion. Version one: It would be possible to make up for the deficiency mentioned by comrade Jassó by all sides signing publicly [a declaration] that now it is only these two and we can go on negotiating until the next session of Parliament in October, but then it should be each one related to this issue. In that case everyone must sign up publicly, on television and it should be declared. This is one version for the case if there is no [global] agreement.

The other version is that we do not submit anything now, not even the ones that are ready, we give some more time for political conciliation talks, hoping that during the October session we will be able to submit all fundamental laws globally. In the case of this version, however, it is also necessary to have guarantees that the deadline is the October session of Parliament and we must agree until then, as in the previous case.

Another aspect of the issue is the date of the elections. I do not want to enter into political and economic details, nobody has said here that it would be more advantageous for us to hold the elections at a later date. The majority of us has argued that we should aim at the soonest possible date. In that case it is..., that is to say, the soonest, the first possible date would be December. For the elections to take place in December, however, the fundamental laws should be submitted to Parliament in September, in the way I have just outlined, if possible. That would be sixty days and the big question is whether the MSZMP is ready. I am not interested in the opposition in this respect. Is our party prepared for the elections? The question arises at this point: what the congress of the MSZMP to be held on the 6th or 7th of October is able to do, whether it will produce one, two or more parties. I think this will be discussed tomorrow at the meeting of the Central Committee.

The second version for the date of the elections in that case is March. That is to say, the possible dates of the elections are December; the date in March, discussed by the government; and the third date is June. The majority of the government did not think there would be a significant difference between December or March. They considered December and June to be the real alternatives. If, however, the elections are postponed to March or even further, there is an additional problem, apart from the party. In that case it is necessary to strengthen the legitimacy of the government and Parliament and tough draft bills and economic issues must be submitted to Parliament. This is where the conflict arises between strategy and tactics and where the relationship between politics and the economy should be considered.

Because if there will be no agreement made on the negotiations with the IMF starting now, then I..., we can maybe make them accept the end of the year situation if the reserves are somewhere around 600-800 million USD, however, I only consider it to be sufficient until February or March without an agreement. We can, however, only reach an agreement with them, if we start to cut on subsidies and begin liquidations. I am going to talk about trade unions later. We must change our housing policy... I could

go on listing the items, but I do not want to frighten anyone. In that case, the measures of the government will certainly affect the MSZMP; that is to say, we will arrange for the international conditions for a one-year agreement, but I can not imagine that it would not fall back on the head of the MSZMP (*Nyers: We are going to lose the elections, that is for sure*). And then it does not matter at all what decision the Central Committee is going to make tomorrow concerning the question of whether there are parties at the workplaces or not.

Well, *summa summarum*... by the way, not to mention that I think it is impossible that this Parliament is going to accept a tougher law or budget submitted by the government, even if we strengthen them with six declarations that we, the party consider them to be legitimate. Therefore the final conclusion is that we should negotiate and create the conditions for the negotiations at tomorrow's Central Committee meeting, let us try to bring each draft into a state suitable for submission within a few, or maximum ten days. If it is at all possible, Parliament should rather assemble at the end of September, hold a two- or three-day break, if the package arrives with a delay, and continue their work at the beginning of October, discuss the drafts; and if all conditions are given, the MSZMP, the government or Parliament through the government should initiate the elections, setting the soonest possible date for them. In my view, our only chance for survival is to hold the elections the soonest possible and I would approach the issue of how to react to the disputed issues from this perspective.

[...]

**Róbert Burgert:** In my opinion it would be useful if the government took over certain things that have been accepted and if we showed some determination in the sense that certain things have been given into the hands of the government, instead of allowing them to force us into a process of never-ending bargaining; we should go on with the negotiations, at the same time we should show some determination and submit things to the government. We should assess where we could draw this line.

I completely agree that it is not enough that we say, concerning the president of the republic, that we have a candidate and the idea sinks in the party. Comrade Pozsgay is right that there is more opposition inside than outside; we should bring a resolution that this is our candidate, and we want him to become the president of the republic, because now we want a communist to be the president of the republic. We should, however, stand up for this idea, and should clarify this. At the same time it is only elementary that these parties should have the opportunity, have the means and offices and whatever they need for their operation.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** As far as leading the negotiating delegation is concerned, it is not a reward and it is certainly not very pleasant. I suggest that comrade Vastagh should go and represent his position at the negotiations. It is naivety to think that the agenda or the negotiating positions [of others] can be modified according to our conception. Apart from this, I have a problem and I ask for your advice. There has been propaganda within the party using abusive language that Pozsgay is selling the party so that he can become president of the republic, to put it roughly. I do not need that, and we should make a decision in this issue; I need some support. I was glad yesterday that comrade Nyers announced publicly, in front of the representatives that he would support the negotiating

delegation but the delegation must bear this type of burdens. This is what I wanted to inform you about. Our situation and the negotiations.

A negotiating delegation's task is to negotiate and to know what its negotiating positions are; but I hope everybody is aware that the positions the MSZMP has lost have not been lost at the negotiating table. Because if they do not know, we should give up the negotiations, and find some other means. If, however, we know that it is not about the negotiating positions, that is, that we did not lose at the negotiating table but somewhere else, then the negotiating delegation needs total support and encouragement too in certain cases, accepting the risks, because I do not consider it to be a negotiating delegation if it is only a messenger, technical employees can do that kind of job or we can send a tape recorder. Therefore I would like to reach an agreement here in specific issues.

One more thing concerning the negotiations. I have always believed that at stake is the peaceful transition. Because things can be dealt with in the street as well. It has already started..., it is already on its way, and then we may be forced to accept positions that are much worse than these. We should also count with that. Concerning the workers' platform and the unity of workers: we must realize, comrades, that the trade unions have also singled out this base for themselves, but the point is that they can only obtain this base if they differentiate themselves sharply from the MSZMP. I do not think they would be completely half-baked and stupid, because then they would not do this. What they would do then is that they would identify with the MSZMP and present themselves in this struggle as supportive trade unions. But they see possible gains for themselves on the other side. These things need to be clarified. (*Nyers: They are trying.*) Well, this is what has been happening.

[...] I do not want to go into details now, since lots of important ideas and proposals have been voiced to support the delegation. I would also like to tell you that I hold on to my opinion concerning party units at the workplace, but I asked the Central Committee in the MTI wire statement not out of hypocrisy and not as a pseudo-solution. Asking them to do this also means that I am ready to accept the position of the Central Committee, but I do not want to change my opinion if it would go against my beliefs, because I do believe that this issue involves further questions. So I do not think it would be honest or coherent to bring this question to the Central Committee pretending it is an independent question at the negotiations, which could simply be decided upon either way. It is part of the whole jumble of the negotiations, the whole political jumble, and I have to say again that until we negotiate, we should really negotiate.

There is quite another situation if we say that we do not negotiate, but then again, in that case also, we should not leave out what would happen then, it should be evaluated, and the position of the delegation should be also supported, and also the position of the government and of Parliament. So I have to, I am going to report objectively and honestly what my experience has been at the negotiations; my interpretation was not really criticized. But I have to point out what the other side of the coin is: all the other political parties would be flocking to the workplaces, and the MSZMP would become even more disheartened since we do not have too much power of persuasion at the workplace, and their colleagues would only look down on party members more and more, and they would become even more discouraged as a reaction to it, and the third thing is that we would lose another negotiating position, perhaps on an item which should even be offered by us for free since we would not be able to defend it anyway. So, these are the things that I would like to ask from...

And I also have a question: should I raise the issue of being a candidate for the presidency, and also, can I take it upon myself after all. Because, and I have to repeat this, with the shadow of suspicion that it is a question of a political deal for me, I can not really do it.

**Rezső Nyers:** What do you mean by 'a question of a political deal'?

**Imre Pozsgay:** Well, that they say that I (*Nyers: Yes, yes, all right.*) give up the positions of the party one by one so that in the end I would...

**Rezső Nyers:** Well, I would like to ask you one question before you go. By all means, I agree that the Political Com... the Central Committee should not handle this issue of party activities at the workplace in isolation, but as one of the significant questions in need of an answer in the context of the roundtable talks and the current political situation. Now, it is quite significant that two different positions have been voiced publicly. One was proposed by you at the roundtable talks as a personal opinion, and I have to stress this, as a personal opinion. Another position was outlined by the president of the MSZMP as a personal opinion, again, a personal opinion. At the session of the Presidium previously held I thought it was my duty to share my position with you in advance. (*Pozsgay: Yes, you did.*) Well, I did, but you did not do the same. And it was not possible, either. I only wanted to tell you this for the sake of fair play.

But this is not the issue here. The question is whether you regard it as an obstacle to co-operation that after your personal opinion had been voiced, my personal opinion was voiced as well. And whether you are ready to accept the position of the Central Committee, whatever it may turn out to be? I am ready to accept the decision of the Central Committee. Because it is a question of our co-operation within the Presidium.

**Imre Pozsgay:** That is clear. I have answered your last question.

**Rezső Nyers:** The question of the presidency is not on the agenda. I do not consider it as such, and what is more, I have also emphasized that the position of the head of the negotiating delegation is not on the agenda, either.

**Imre Pozsgay:** I have answered the last question, I say it again, comrade Nyers. I am ready to accept the resolution of the Central Committee and to act accordingly. I would like to co-operate as much as possible. I do not think that the differences of opinion between us are tragic, they can be bridged, since this is not the main issue. I have considered the situation difficult, which means that there must have been some misunderstanding between us then, because I thought I was aware of comrade Nyers's position in respect of this issue, but if I retreat into an MTI-statement, then it would not accomplish much in the public opinion, and it looks like that the situation in Budapest, or whatever, has made it necessary, and I do not have hard feelings in connection with this now.

I think this is a difficult situation because it is now interpreted as something like 'well, well, at last Nyers and Pozsgay got mad at each other as well' and that is where I see the main problem, and yesterday it was already going on, it was circulating in the crowd. (*Nyers: It is unfortunate, but it is not my fault, but it has been happening indeed.*) I just wanted to make this clear, that these were the antecedents, this is how it

happened, and speculations have already sprung up and become part of the issues in the political market. So, I would like to excuse myself again, dear Executive Committee, and comrade Nyers, but I do have to go now, because...

**Rezső Nyers:** All right, so I suggest you should not raise the issue of the presidency.

[...]

**Imre Nagy:** As comrade Rajki has already referred to that debate in February, and both the current situation and the debate eerily remind me of the situation and debate back then, I was also invited to that session of the Political Committee in February. This is quite similar to that debate, the debate on the 'people's uprising' issue, when there was also a statement made in a dubious form which was easy to criticize, and then came a great uproar, and if we had not left all that behind, we would be in a much more difficult situation now. It was also a thing back then which should have been declared by the party itself earlier, and the main problem was also caused in that situation as well by the fact that the membership of the party was confronted all of a sudden with something we should have prepared them for much earlier.

I see the current situation the same way. I feel that the speed at which we have been preparing to transform ourselves into another party for the new circumstances might be considered fast compared to our internal mechanisms and therefore difficult to follow, but compared to the pace of changes in the reality around us, we are slow, and therefore we are late all the time. In the past couple of weeks – due to my position in DEMISZ – I travelled around the country extensively, I went to most counties, and I visited a couple of places several times, and my experience has been that the national tendency is that party units at the workplace are breaking up. I can only reinforce what has been said by comrade Tatai. I sat down to talk to our own secretaries at big companies and they told me the same thing. They also pointed out that the general tendency is that party secretaries become managers and the directors of companies who are otherwise members of the party are systematically pushing out the party units from the companies. I must say it is quite understandable.

Considering all this, I agree with Miklós Németh and Ilona Tatai concerning the main question, that is, we should not walk out from the tripartite negotiations because of this issue. As I see it, the future of our party mostly depends on its ability to be something else than it had been in the circumstances of one-party rule, and just as importantly, on its ability to make society believe that the party is already something else than what the MSZMP had been. It is not enough to change if the people do not believe we have changed. At least until the elections. If we walk away due to the issue of party activities at the workplace, acting on the basis of an angry first reaction, in which it is difficult for me to see how much originates with the membership, and how much is presented and organized by the leading personalities of the party units at the workplaces, just as it was difficult to see in the issue of the 'people's uprising' the same way; well, it is also shown by the reaction to the programme declaration that there has been an essentially positive reaction, and if we take a step backwards now, then on the one hand, I think, this party will be unable to change, because the feeling that it is necessary to change would not be so strong any longer, and on the other hand, society would not believe that we take it seriously that we want to create out of the MSZMP a new – or I put it another way to avoid any misunderstandings –, a party which has new characteristics.

Out of the MSZMP; and I would partially reply to comrade Jassó's question as well: I firmly believe that the numerous trends and ideological groups within the MSZMP today would not stay together, we would all agree on this, in this room at least, because the pronounced break lines within the party do not cross this room, and the party should not retain all of those groups, because then the people will give us a quick answer at the elections. For me the conclusion of all this is not that anyone [who wants to] should organize his own party. But it is quite obvious for me that whereas we should not retreat, we do have to react to the various opinions of our members, we have to explain things and provide reasons for our actions, and we have to find the right words which are not simply official.

A text has been put together at the tripartite talks which is also accepted by the Opposition Roundtable now. Its first sentence is that party units can not operate and can not be organized at the workplace, at the school, etc., and then there is a sentence which explains what it implies. I think if we make this text public, it would ease things up a little. It would not put an end to the problems, because a fundamental conflict does exist, objectively, but it would ease up that conflict a little bit. The other issue: the roundtable talks. I am in a schizophrenic situation to a certain extent, since at the moment I am the head of the delegation of the Third Side, but putting it aside now... but anyway, concerning this, there are no differences of opinion between the Third Side and the MSZMP.

I would back up what has been proposed by comrade Nyers, that is, we should hold on to our original position concerning the issue of the president of the republic, even if it proves to be a breaking point, that is, to elect a president through the direct vote of the people and not later than the date of the parliamentary elections. I would support the idea of holding elections in December with the arguments outlined by comrade Németh yesterday, but also adding to it that our tactics should then be set by counting back from the elections in December, which means that if it is possible, with an agreement, if it is not possible, then without it, but with the smallest possible explosion; but the bills without which it is not possible to hold the elections in December should be submitted in Parliament during its session in September.

[...]

**János Barabás:** Excuse me, I have something else to say, I am not finished yet. My last remark would concern comrade Fejti's suggestion that the aspects of the political transition apart from the fundamental laws, that is, if I understood correctly, the work in the other two special committees, should be slowed down so that we would be able to speed up the work concerning economic and social topics if there is an agreement. I agree with this out of selfishness as well. My selfish interest in this is that with this proposal we might have enough time to work out a clear-cut authorization for our delegation in respect of the issue of the information of the public. As far as I know, in the framework of the roundtable talks there are experts' negotiations concerning the publicity of the talks, and I think it might be necessary to have the authorization of our delegation discussed in a body of the party, either in the Political Executive Committee or in the Presidium, because the scope of competence of this independent supervising committee..., the Presidium had also proposed that Parliament should set up a Radio and Television Committee, and there had been a former decision that there should be a committee to supervise and guard the proportions of media coverage during the election campaign; these three things should be synchronized somehow and our mandate needs

to be clearly defined. So I would like to suggest that if the talks are slowed down, we should grab the opportunity to discuss the authorization of our delegation in this respect.

[...]

**Rezső Nyers:** I suggest we should finalize now that tomorrow at the session of the Central Committee there would be two speakers of the agenda; concerning the preparations for the congress and the current state of affairs of the party: comrade Jenő Kovács, and concerning the trilateral talks and in part the programme of Parliament: comrade Pozsgay, and then it is desirable to have comrade Pál Iványi inform us briefly concerning the problems in connection with the assets of the party, and comrade Fejti should inform us on the situation in Parliament, he should talk about the trilateral talks as well, but we should also be informed concerning the meeting of our members of Parliament. I would... I will give a short introduction, which would be a list of events basically, no deep analysis, but I would refer to the meeting of the group of our representatives in Parliament because I think it is important politically, and comrade Fejti could perhaps say more about it.

Concerning the debated issues, I would like to suggest that the political conciliation talks, these trilateral conciliation talks should be qualified by us as being satisfactorily under way, that is, under way in accordance with our goals. Concerning the next step to take, we should maintain our position in respect of the four fundamental bills and the modification of the Constitution, that is, we should not alter it, we should not take it back, we should not give concessions, and we should reinforce what has been achieved by our delegation.

Regarding the time of the elections, we should be more flexible ourselves, still, we should maintain the possibility of holding the elections this year, and we should even urge to hold the elections this year, since the economic situation would necessitate it; I mean we should try, but we should also be prepared for the possibility that no elections are held this year. We should also mention the difficulty which we have taken into account previously, that is, that we would be unable to push the necessary minimum through Parliament to maintain the viability of the economy, but today we are less obliged to take it into account, because the group of communists are not breaking up any more, on the contrary, they seem to be pulling themselves together.

We are going to discuss two issues separately now. We should maintain our position concerning the presidential system of the republic and the separate referendum to be held for the election of the president, and of course our candidate should stay the same, we should not give concessions here. We fully agree on this here as well.

Concerning another issue, the organization of party units at the workplace, different opinions have been expressed. It is not worth counting where the majority was, it was basically on the side of the original position of the Political Executive Committee, which is not supporting a campaign-like retreat. We should argue in front of the Central Committee, there are going to be different opinions, we can not close ourselves off, the Central Committee is aware of it anyway that there are different positions. Those positions have not come closer to each other, but we agree that we should not over-dramatize this, this is not regarded as a political schism of the party, we are just discussing what is good for the party, and also what is in the interest of the country.

The two things are correlated, in my opinion it is in the interest of the country, how shall I put it, that there should be an intact, or still quite powerful, not-so-stumbling MSZMP which is also needed in the process of democratization, and the question is to what extent would the ability of the MSZMP to function be impaired if the Central Committee accepted the position of the negotiating delegation which has been outlined by comrade Pozsgay as a personal opinion, and I stress this, and he also put it this way: as a personal opinion. I think this is a sign of discrepancies within the party, we have to admit that. The leadership has to take the responsibility for it. This is a question of, how shall I put it, co-ordination within the leadership. It has been a mistake in the internal co-ordination. We could say... we can not say it was only Pozsgay's fault. We have to take the responsibility for it. And primarily it is going to be the president who takes the responsibility.

[...] The best thing to do for Pozsgay is to refer to this issue in his presentation mentioning that there are two different positions about it within the party, this one and that one, and then he could outline his position but also say he tolerates the fact that there is another position. You see? Nobody insists on exclusivity.

The Central Committee either takes a uniform position that we can consider the position of the party, or it remains strongly divided, and then we will have to ask the congress to formulate a position. It would probably interrupt the roundtable talks, but we can not do this any other way, [if] it interrupts the talks, well, then it interrupts the talks. The function of the president of the republic would also interrupt them, it would be even more probable to interrupt them, because at the moment the positions are quite different, so there is no need at all to over-dramatize this issue for this reason, either.

We should maintain our theoretical position, in my opinion, as it has been stated by the Political Executive Committee, that most of the activities of the party should be redirected to the geographical constituencies, but the option of exercising the right of public meeting at the workplaces should also stay. When the political situation requires it, when there might be confusion due to the presence of several parties at the workplaces, then we can decide on this. But now I am of the opinion that we should keep to the position of the PEC that we should not walk out directly.

[...] In my opinion, a one-party government will not have enough support for the implementation of comprehensive economic reforms unfortunately. I think we can not take on more than what is necessary to honestly survive, in terms of shifting the economic difficulties to the masses, only what is absolutely necessary, not more, because it will have to be done together. On my part, I do not really support that the MSZMP alone should sacrifice itself through a series of austerity measures and then the opposition would be (*Interruption: frying bacon*) on our grave. They will not be. They will not be frying bacon because they will realize what difficulties they are inheriting. They will not be, either. But then (*Grósz: ...they will sober up on seeing the final results*) (*Grósz is laughing*) they should sober up, because it would be to the disadvantage of the people, it would hurt the people, so I would think the government needs courage to... anyway, financial measures are necessary all the same.



Document 66.  
Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee  
[Imre Pozsgay on the Roundtable Negotiations].  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 1, 1989.*



**Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee  
[Imre Pozsgay on the Roundtable Talks]**

September 1, 1989.

Verbatim Record (Excerpts).

**Comrade Imre Pozsgay:** Dear Comrades! I agree with Comrade Nyers's introductory words and in accordance with his comment I would like to inform the Central Committee about the outcomes of the discussions and the discussions themselves that were, are presently being and will be carried on in the next week between the three negotiating partners. What necessitates that the Central Committee be informed about the negotiations is that the negotiating delegation needs to know the Central Committee's position and needs its support as well to decide about some issues.

I would like to tell it in advance that the negotiating delegation was commissioned by the Central Committee that provided the delegation with political guidelines to be represented in the course of the negotiations. That is the reason why the Central Committee is responsible for making decisions concerning crucial political questions brought up in the course of the negotiations, as well as to set new guidelines for the future course of the negotiations. [sic!]

I also would like to tell, before I turn to the concrete theme of my report, that in the opinion of the delegation – and this opinion is primarily corresponds to the conclusions of the discussion held within the Political Executive Committee – the negotiations are successful in following the major course of the Central Committee's intentions, thus they are fruitful. However, there are unsettled questions and it is going to be one of the tasks of the today's session to articulate a position concerning these questions.

Before turning to the report I would like to remind the Central Committee that our original political purpose to start these negotiations was – and I believe that this original goal does not need to be modified – to provide the forces present in the country's political life and wishing to participate in the present political struggle with an opportunity to negotiate at a roundtable and not in the street their positions concerning the political problems related to the transition and within that primarily to establish the constitutional conditions for founding a constitutional state based on the principles of the democratic socialism in order to reach social, national and public consensus.

An important condition of the negotiations that they be not held in the atmosphere of fear, and the negotiating partners do not have an attitude of suspicion and hostility towards each other, but they recognize the basic interest of the nation and negotiate with each other in the spirit of cooperation.

The primary goal of these negotiations is to ground effective and fully developed institutions that would participate in constituting laws and in the constitutional work. These institutions would guarantee the peaceful transition that is not characterized by anxiety, the project of the transition, that is, the establishment of the democratic-socialist constitutional state. That was our shared goal and after the known precedents that we do not have to evoke now, the party took the initiative to launch the negotiations.

Based on what I have just laid out, the negotiating delegation of the MSZMP does refuse the assumption of that part of the radical opposition, as well as their propaganda work based on this assumption, that claims that the MSZMP is a fundamentalist and doctrinaire political party that basically wants to reestablish the former social structure, therefore, the conditions necessary to establish the formerly described democratic

constitutional state have to be violently extorted in the form of concessions from the MSZMP which is the real organization that wields power.

It is exactly us that initiated these negotiations. It proves that the MSZMP is not a party that wants to resign from the power and transfer it to the successors, but that it wants to participate in this process as a founder of the new democratic constitutional state and this party, and its political strength is necessary to complete the transition.

After having reminded the Central Committee about these precedents and goals, I respectfully would like to inform the Central Committee about the conditions among which the delegation of the MSZMP in order to achieve the above described goals is taking part in these negotiations and is carrying on discussions with the representatives of the Opposition Roundtable and with those social, political organizations that constitute the Third Side in these negotiations.

First of all I would like to repeat what we all know that the preliminary conditions of the negotiations were not agreed upon at the roundtable, and its final outcome will not be born there either. [sic!] I would like to remind the Central Committee again that should any strategies, indications and initiatives be articulated in the normal, natural course of the negotiations/bargaining process, the party will not make any decisions without having the approval of the Central Committee to them. We have informed the representatives of the Opposition Roundtable and the negotiations were being carried out in the last week in this spirit.

Therefore, what I would like to repeat is that the delegation of the MSZMP will present certain positions in the negotiations after having had the approval of the Central Committee to them. Following the course of the negotiations today I will present the outcomes of the negotiation we carried out until now. [sic!] To emphasize one more thing about the preconditions: the course and the conduct of the negotiating delegation is determined primarily by matters having agreed upon in advance, before the negotiations. That is, the Central Committee decided in its February session that it will recognize the multiparty system and agreed to accept that the social and governing position is a result of free elections and this position aims at establishing a multiparty political system.

The second, to continue reiterating these preconditions, is that the Central Committee has approved those most important measures initiated by the party which were concerned with transforming the provinces and duties and among which the most significant was the transformation of the sphere of authority of the party cadres.

The third, not mentioning everything, is that it was a very important consequence of the second precondition that the government's sovereignty and independent responsibility was established continuously and gradually, moreover, a part of the social political organizations that used to be governed by the MSZMP became partly self-governing, while another part of them became fully independent. These processes and preconditions had taken place and had been set before the negotiations started, [sic!] to a great extent they determined the position of the negotiating delegation, that is, they determined the condition in which we were supposed to be carrying out the negotiations, as well as it made us forget about our former conduct that we had followed throughout the party's history.

I also would like to mention that exactly for this reason there was a certain degree of confusion, hesitation and disorientedness within the party concerning the course of the discussions and negotiations. Partly, it can be explained with the fact that the negotiations received publicity only when they had already reached an advanced stage. If I wanted to come up with a metaphor I could say that the media's starting to broadcast the negotiations in a later stage is exactly like starting to watch a feature film from the second half of it.

There was also a confusion both within the party and in the public opinion concerning the interpretation of publicity, that is, there was a confusion, or misunderstanding about what was supposed to get publicity and what was not.

It was a difficulty for the party to be responsible – simultaneously with carrying out the negotiations at the roundtable – for keeping its own members informed, since – as we could also learn it from Comrade Jenő Kovács's account – the negotiations are taking place in parallel with the arrangements for the parliamentary session, so it is natural that the party's internal life focuses on these arrangements.

To turn to the negotiations, after having described the circumstances, I would like to say couple of words about the relationships of the three sides with each other and their cooperation.

From this perspective, it was obvious from the very beginning of the negotiations for the delegation of the MSZMP that the Opposition Roundtable conceives our delegation as their enemies and their representatives gave great publicity to their attitude. According to the basic agreement it was demanded – rightfully – by the MSZMP that the Third Side join the negotiations and it was the outcome of long lasting negotiations and skirmishes that the Opposition Roundtable agreed to participate in these trilateral preliminary meetings to achieve the assigned goals. There was something we had no chance of knowing that time, and these political changes generated further alterations from our original goals. Namely, simultaneously with the MSZMP's getting prepared for the negotiations new processes evolved within the society. One of the most characteristic of these processes – we have already talked about it in other contexts, and I suppose that we will talk about it again later in the course of our discussions – that the negotiating partner taking its seat on the third side, that is composed of a number of social organizations, is striving at articulating positions independent from the MSZMP, thus demonstrating for its own membership and for the society as well the authenticity and independence of its organization. The MSZMP's delegation that is participating in the negotiations has to face this new political situation. [sic!] The first conflict related to this new situation became public exactly this week. It was a shocking experience also for the public opinion that the delegation of the National Council of Trade Unions following the decision of the board of the SZOT left the roundtable and suspended its participation. Their final decision will be made in their next week's session.

The disagreement was about a question of codification, but this question had a political nature, and I will get back to it later when I will talk about the election-law. However, it was not this disagreement that made the Third Side leave the negotiations, but the attitude that the representatives of the National Council of Trade Unions attributed to the Opposition Roundtable. I would not say that the delegation of the SZOT was not right in this matter. Namely, in opposition with the basic agreement the Opposition Roundtable started questioning the competency of the Third Side in the decision making. The representatives of the SZOT argued that if the Opposition Roundtable and the MSZMP come to an agreement with each other then the Third Side is obliged not to retard the progress in the negotiations. There is a slippage in this argument, because according to the basic agreement all of the three partners are obliged not to retard the process of the negotiations. On the other hand, the MSZMP since it agreed to the order of the trilateral negotiations has not debated that the Third Side has an equal right in participating in the negotiations and in making decisions as the other two negotiating partners have.

We would like to petition that – I guess that the Opposition Roundtable will also recognize that it has to change its position in this matter – that the National Council of

Trade Unions consent that its delegation joins the trilateral-negotiations and we would like to express that we feel sorry that they are absent from these negotiations.

The course of the negotiations was guided by two documents for all of the three participating parties. The content of these documents is in accordance with the former political guidelines issued by Central Committee. The first document is a basic agreement that claims that the negotiations will be carried on in many levels in order to achieve political reconciliation. The second document was presented by the fully assigned chair of the delegation – that is, not by the chair of the delegation at the middle level negotiations – in the so called plenary meeting. It was a declaration of intention that expressed in a ceremonial form the intent of the MSZMP to carry out the negotiations based on the political intentions by that time introduced to the party membership and to the public as well. These agreements include certain issues that were results of compromises, therefore in a certain sense these issues define the position our delegation can represent in the negotiations.

First of all, all of the three negotiating partners agreed that the constitutional laws that are of primary importance have to be submitted to the parliament after the three parties have come to consensus concerning them.

Second, the negotiating parties agreed that the negotiations be carried out without deadlines, although it is laid down in the basic agreement that the negotiations have to be scheduled in order to contribute to provide the conditions for a peaceful and safe transition. Criticizing these two issues of the agreement, the opposition – whenever it can afford – performs a deconstructive attitude, halts the discussions and hinders the achieving of agreements. The position of the delegation of the MSZMP is in opposition with this attitude. As this position is concerned we would like to ask the Central Committee to confirm it.

One of the principles – and we could call it the principle of globality or complexity – is that the drafts of the constitutional laws be discussed together, because all of them are indispensable to provide the conditions for the peaceful and safe transition. If these drafts of the constitutional laws are separated from each other, they will provide unfavorable conditions for our participation in the political struggle. The election-law, the party-law and the review of the constitution together make up the political and institutional preconditions and if any of them is missing then we cannot consider the negotiations fruitful and complete. That is, if any of these drafts of laws is incomplete, the others cannot be completed either and the political preconditions cannot be established. This position, that I will have to return to later, has consequences for the Parliament as well, that will have to articulate its own position concerning this issue.

One of these themes, that primarily is not to be discussed in the negotiations, is the setting a date for the election. We do not have to articulate a position in this matter now, although comments, opinions concerning it would provide enormous help in clarifying our political position. Later this issue will be submitted again to the Central Committee. This matter conditions when we can submit the three bills to the Parliament. If we are thinking in terms of an election that would be rescheduled to an earlier date, then the last session to discuss these bills is the September session of the Parliament. If we decided to schedule the election for October, then this project could be scheduled for the October session or later.

The other problem is related to the position that our delegation should take if concerning any of the three drafts we cannot come to an agreement with the other two parties without compromising our own interests and if in this case the negotiations get stuck. The question concerning this matter is that in this case – this is a possible

alternative, in which enormous political risks are inherent and which might evoke an international propaganda directed against us – whether we should accept those results that the negotiations have yielded up to that point, and without further modifications we would consider these results as a political grounding for submitting the bills to the Parliament. On the other hand, as those matters are concerned that we could not settle with the other negotiating partners and that are suspended, we ourselves should conduct the constitutional work following the position of the government and the MSZMP and submit the bills to the Parliament.

Finally, we can think in terms of an alternative – and I believe that the biggest risk is inherent in this alternative – that the Central Committee of the MSZMP approves those results that we have reached so far and we will submit these to the Parliament for its September session. In this case we would prolong the rest for later sessions depending on the progress, results of the further negotiations. In this case it cannot be guaranteed that our interests, expectations in relation to the review of the Constitution will be fulfilled and our results and positions concerning the negotiations will not be lost. Here I have to emphasize that the opposition is not interested in urging the grounding work of the review of the Constitution. [sic!] I am just mentioning this alternative, but I want to emphasize that in this case we may have to change our negotiating position. We do have to decide whether we would want to continue the negotiations concerning the three crucial laws, the election-law, the party-law and the review of the Constitution, until we cannot come to an agreement with the two other negotiating partners. In terms of politics it would be advantageous for our party, as well as would be welcomed by both the national and the international media as a great result if we could accept certain political disadvantages and compromises and let the opposition have certain political advantages for propaganda purposes while we would not give up our own position. In this case the government would submit the three bills to the Parliament even if we cannot come to agreement about them.

In this political context I would like to highlight one more thing to which I have already referred to in a different context: who decides about the fate of the laws? We should explain all misunderstandings concerning this issue, so that the media could not generate newer ones. We made it unequivocal, and it is still our political position, that the Central Committee makes the decisions for the party and approves the results of the negotiations, whereas it is the government, that is the executive board responsible for completing the background work for the law-amendments, submits these bills to the Parliament and it is the Parliament that makes the decisions. It is a process we cannot contest and we will not even contest it. Although the Opposition Roundtable does question the legitimacy and the competence of the Parliament, the delegation of the MSZMP cannot make any political compromise in this matter. This week we had a fruitful discussion concerning this matter with the party-fraction of the Parliament.

After this introduction I would like to get the Central Committee acquainted with some of the questions that were brought up in the course of the negotiations. I would also add that the members of the Central Committee have already received the drafts and the different concepts for these drafts. Based on our former positions and decisions you could get familiar with the political concept of the laws and should you have any question concerning the preparation of the drafts, the experts of the delegation are present and ready to answer your questions.

What are the results of the negotiations that we can consider to be politically acceptable and complete? We could agree on the amendment of the Criminal Law, the amendment of this law has been completed, therefore this bill is ready to be submitted to the Parliament. The negotiations on the criminal proceedings has been completed, so this

bill can be put on the agenda of the Parliament. Basically we could also agree on the political conditions, principles of the election-law. Having accepted in the course of the preliminary political negotiation the idea of establishing the institutional form of a one-house parliament and the so called two-round election system, in the discussion of the election-law the delegation of the MSZMP was fighting a political fight that the opposition could not exclude the candidates of the MSZMP from the second round of the electoral battle in case if the opposition makes an agreement with other parties about running the same candidate for more parties. The negotiating parties could come to an agreement concerning this matter. If the Parliament approves this law, then it will declare that a candidate has to gain 15% of the votes to be able to participate in the second round of the election.

There was a question whose discussion led to a debate which resulted in the SZOT's leaving the negotiation roundtable. This question was related to the issue whether the social and political organizations as political organizations can run candidates independently in the election. In this question both the Opposition and the MSZMP agreed that in case of a system of a one-house parliament this situation would be confusing as the parliamentary system, constitutional principles and administrative conditions concerned and would result in a chaos in the constitutional work. The representatives of the Third Side did not accept this position and insisted that they be able to participate in the election by having the right to run their own candidates independently from other parties. I do not want to get into the details – of course – and I do not want to list the pro and contra arguments because everyone is familiar with them. Although it is certain – and I have to repeat it now – that the debate was not about normativity, that is, it was not about the normative ranking of the different political organizations and institutions. This debate is about the principles of constitutional law, which principle was approved by the MSZMP as a principle indispensable for parliamentarism.

I would like to highlight two issues concerning the discussion of the party-law. One of them generated a great storm in the public opinion, so I would like to ask the Central Committee to articulate a position concerning this question. One of the questions is concerned with the properties of the party. The law declares in principle – and the delegation of the MSZMP had discussed this matter in a political debate and had agreed to this law – that when a party gets registered as a political party, it is obliged to provide an trustworthy report on its assets. The other questions concerning this matter are not related to the legislation, but to a political debate that was quite well presented by the opposition to the public, since this was one of the dominant themes of their appearance in the media in the last couple of days. The question is the following: to whom is the MSZMP supposed to report on its assets, incomes and the sources it obtained those assets and the purposes the party wishes to spend this income. In this matter the position of the delegation is – and we cannot change this position – that the MSZMP is surely not obliged to report on its assets and incomes in the trilateral negotiation to the Opposition Roundtable and to the Third Side. This matter is not on the agenda of the negotiations and there was no any preliminary agreement about it. At the same time the MSZMP approves some of the principles that are indispensable to managing the negotiations.

One of these principles, that we cannot abandon in principle because the opposition can turn it against us, is that the multiparty system do not cost more to the tax paying citizens than the one-party political system. This principle is difficult to get through.

The other principle is not political, but practical. That is, for being able to run and to have a chance to participate in the political struggle the new parties, political organizations – only if they already exist in reality and their existence is recognized by the



law – need certain infrastructural supplies such as headquarters, means of communication, media, international relations etc., I would not wish to continue listing these. In this question our opinion and position is that that we do not want to give anything from the party's assets, incomes and profits to the opposition and the other parties. However to a reasonable degree of contingent the MSZMP is willing to offer some of its benefits that it is not needed for its management – mainly the party would offer some of the rights of use of some properties and those investments that have been purchased from state budget since 1978 – to the government so that it could turn this source into satisfying the infrastructural needs of the other parties. Although the government can use this source for other purposes as well.

There is a debate about the norms, our delegation holds the opinion that in the present political situation it is ambiguous to transfer these benefits in advance to the oppositional parties in a normative form. It would be more reasonable to transfer these benefits to the oppositional parties after the election in the proportion of the number of mandates they have gained or in proportion of the percentage of votes they won. The parties have to have control over the state subsidies in proportion with the mandates they gained.

The other debate – as I referred to it earlier – was about the place of the activities of the party organizations. Here I start out from the basic principle supported by the Central Committee that the political activities of the members of the MSZMP could be carried out more successfully and more advantageous conditions could be established for the participation of the party's candidates in the election if the members of the party and party organizations conducted their propaganda activities in those places of which they are permanent residents. There is one condition – inspired by constitutional laws of the same spirit – that is, that in the case of certain professions the laws restrict the freedom of association. [sic!] Therefore, the judges or the members of the Constitutional Court cannot be members of any political party. There was a political debate about the position to be taken up concerning the armed forces and organizations. The opposition demanded that no member of this organization be allowed to be a member of any party. The delegation of the MSZMP did not accept this position, because it came to the conclusion and position that the members of the armed forces and organizations, either fully employed or not have to be allowed to be members of parties and can found their own organizations as well. However the structural conditions to run these organizations have to be established outside of the army posts and places of service. This opinion, position was finally accepted by the two other negotiating partners. They also accepted that no party organizations can operate within offices that are in charge of handling public affairs such as ministerial offices, district, municipal, town councils, public prosecutor's offices or subordinate offices within this circle.

There was a debate that is still unsettled about whether the MSZMP had authorization in the negotiation to take a position concerning the question whether party organizations could operate in other workplaces, factories, at companies, in institutions, schools, higher educational institutions. The delegation was authorized to represent the position in the negotiations which was attached to the bill as a supplement; in this supplement the MSZMP acknowledges that within working hours no party activities can be carried on within the workplaces. The MSZMP also approved the positions according to party organizations cannot operate in the top management and they cannot participate in the management of the processes of production or in the organization of administrative processes.

The question that the delegations could not come to terms with was whether the organizations of the party should continue their activities within the factories, institutions or outside of them. Therefore, – and here I would like to clarify all possibly misunderstandable information, some of which have not even been brought up in the negotiations – the discussions were not about that the workplaces could not establish their own organizations, and if they wish to be members of any parties then they have to enter the party organizations that are located in the same district as their workplaces, but about that whether within the factories or companies the party members can cultivate their party-life and party activities.

I have to add that it was the subject of a bargain and it was intertwined with other bargains especially that of the bargains related to the election law, but the delegation of the MSZMP did not make an absolute decision, that is, there was no decision made in the negotiations. Therefore, we did not make a decision and now want the Central Committee to make this decision. That is exactly what I told to the MTI in my statement, that is, that we will ask for approval, support of the Central Committee to make a decision in this matter.

Finally, I would like to highlight one argument and one position concerning this matter. The above described debate is a debate that is carried on within the Political Executive Committee and in other spheres of the party life as well, that is, this question was not brought up by the delegation of the MSZMP only out of blue. All of you who are present in the today's session are well aware that there are two positions concerning this matter and the Central Committee has to decide today in this issue. But before the Central Committee makes its decision I would like to highlight our negotiating position, the context, especially the political context. The Central Committee may want to approve the position according to there can be party organizations within workplaces such as factories, companies, etc., however these party organizations cannot operate within the workplaces. Otherwise, the negotiations may not be able to be continued.

The other position is that party organizations can operate within factories and institutions, but the party activities are carried out according to the above described conditions. If we take this position we may risk the continuation of the negotiations. I would suggest you to consider this opportunity. Of course it is a theoretical question whether we have to take this step or not. It is important not only from the perspective of the negotiating position, but also we have to consider the condition of the party in this respect and it is also a matter we have to talk about within this debate. I would appreciate if you could take it into account when you will make your decision concerning this matter. I hope to hear sufficiently supported arguments concerning both positions that will be the guidelines to the delegation. My opinion is that from the perspective of the party's future life and its entrance to the multiparty system it would be more advantageous to accept the position that argues that party organizations may be exist within the factories and institutions, but they have to carry on their party activities outside of the factories and institutions. This position will result in having to consider the consequences that come with the fact that in a multiparty system the right to be present within the workplaces has to be assured for all of the parties. This position should also be considered from the perspective of the productive, administrative and other processes since in the framework of the democratic constitutional state the MSZMP would not be the only party any more that would have the right to participate in these processes.

Finally, as far as the context is concerned, which includes abstract as well as concrete issues, I will highlight only some of the more important issues, that is, the issues related to the amendment of the Constitution. There is some progress in this respect, but

the attitude of the opposition concerning certain questions is still rigid and not cooperative. What institutions would be affected by the amendment of the Constitution? First of all, what is at stake is the evaluation of the characteristics of the state and society, that is, how do we perceive the social structure within which we live. The opposition demands that any kind of reference to this issue be erased from the Constitution. In essence I could summarize it as follows: any kind of reference has to be erased from the Constitution and the way a society lives, organizes and conceives itself should be the result and consequence of political struggles and social progress. In this matter we could make some compromise, although there was one issue about which we could not compromise. The position of the delegation of the MSZMP is that the adjectives of socialist or democratic socialist have to be included in the constitution, but the references in this context to social-political relations have to be edited out of the technical parts, because the opposition holds that the threat is there that they establish 'thinking parties' [sic!] that cannot be recognized and will be banned because they cannot be characterized by the 'socialist' adjective.

The other question is related to the institutions, here I want to mention the institution of the president of the republic. The position of the Central Committee concerning this question that was articulated earlier has already been publicized. Its opinion and position emphasizes that there is a need for this institution which does not have to be too strong, has to be regulated by laws and has to be provided only with a restricted circle of power. This institution is needed to assure the peaceful character of the transition and the institution of the president of the republic would be an important element in the distribution of the power in the transition period.

We know the propaganda of the opposition concerning this matter. The opposition holds that it is a political trick from the MSZMP's side to rescue and retain its own power after the transition. Therefore they originally argued that this legal institution should not be established and it should not even be included in the amendment. Later they showed some progress, and finally in the last phase of the negotiations the Opposition Roundtable submitted a version concerning this matter. Their proposal was based on the precedents of the constitutional laws and argued that the first law from 1946 should be guiding, the 1946 republic that had historical connections with the 1918 republic and also with the 1848-49 traditions that had republican aspects. Based on a wide ranging work related to legislation and codification we can say that this proposal contains a politically acceptable content, but the opposition is not willing to compromise in the more relevant questions.

One of these questions is about who should elect the president of the republic. The MSZMP's position is that the nation has to elect the president of the republic, that is, the president has to be elected in a direct election, the sooner the better, if possible, then before the election of the parliamentary members. Presently, the opposition does not seem to be willing to compromise in this question. We have to hold on to our position, and if we cannot come to an agreement with the opposition concerning this matter, that is, the opposition holds on to its own position that the president of the republic be elected after the parliamentary elections in a non-direct way (parliamentary way) there is not much chance left that the MSZMP can have any profit out of it. Therefore we cannot compromise in this question. We have to negotiate further about this issue and we also need to learn the Central Committee's position about the further way of handling the political situation in case if we cannot come to an agreement concerning this question.

The other question is related to the Constitutional Court. We considered this institution also to be one that would guarantee the peaceful transition and suggested that the Constitutional Court be assigned now and all of the positions within it be fulfilled. The compromise we could make is that not all of the positions would get fulfilled now, but

only as many judges would be assigned as needed to operate the Constitutional Court and the remaining positions will be filled with judges appointed by the new Parliament. We could agree to a version like this and it may be acceptable for the opposition as well, although this matter will be discussed further in the negotiations. However, I would like to add to this issue that in this case there appeared a political paradox, since we have already come to agreement in case of a former draft which said that the judges cannot be members of any political party in the future. But the opposition wants to see its own political preferences fulfilled by wanting to have their own candidates appointed.

These are the most significant issues and matters of the negotiations that the delegation wanted to inform the Central Committee about and to ask for the position and decision of the Central Committee concerning these matters. Here I want to repeat that it is the legal and legitimate Parliament that is responsible for the final decision, but the political arrangements are successful only in that way if all of the three negotiating partners could come to an agreement. An agreement that was a result of a consensus expresses our political goals and it will be recognized by both the government and the legislation. [sic!] Therefore, there is a need for further political cooperation in these matters.

Finally I would like to tell the Central Committee in the name of the delegation [sic!] that as we are assigned to this projects we will continue the negotiations with the approval of the Central Committee, that is taking place within negotiating and psychological conditions in a closed system. What is happening outside of the roundtable, how these two worlds should be connected and how should we create political situations that are favorable for us are different matters. I believe that the agreements we achieve in these negotiations will increase the chances of the MSZMP in the upcoming elections. Thank you very much.

Document 67.  
Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee  
[Pál Iványi on the Roundtable Negotiations].  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 1, 1989.*



**Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee  
[Pál Iványi on the Roundtable Talks].**

September 1, 1989.

Verbatim Record (Excerpts).

**Comrade Pál Iványi:** Dear Central Committee! I would like to make short comments related to some of the questions emerged in the course of the discussion. As an old smoker I could use a break as well, Comrade Grósz.

I found the account on the trilateral negotiations correct and objective. To summarize, it is true that the delegation of the MSZMP accomplished a quite significant and hard project. It was not talked about it was just referred to, or was mentioned in other contexts that the trilateral negotiations had a ramification that was concerned with economic issues. That is, it included topics such as the questions of the prevention of the economic crisis. It was based on a philosophy that argued that we should not only talk about political issues, but also should – if you want – force the Opposition Roundtable to discuss important economic questions that have much more relevance to the population itself. There is no doubt that the Third Side was a cooperative partner of the delegation of the MSZMP in the preliminary session of the negotiations to achieve this goal.

The evaluation of the situation that can be conceived as a criticism corresponds to the real situation, that is, the work within the subcommittees discussing issues of the present economic situation result quite slow and little progress. It is partly because the negotiations began later and partly because as the assignment of the members of subcommittees and that of the negotiating delegation itself were concerned the Opposition Roundtable was much less prepared at the time of signing the agreements than as the political negotiations were concerned.

The third, the most relevant argument is that the opposition is not particularly concerned with making any progress in the negotiations related to issues of economics, since it makes its best to represent itself as not at least responsible for the present economic situation. Considering these facts, I would still emphasize that I agree with those who argue that the economic roundtable or trilateral negotiations have to be accelerated. We may expect some changes in this matter in September.

I would like to make a comment that is related to this issue to a certain degree that was brought up in forms of questions during the discussions, which issue is concerned with the triangle of the MSZMP, trade unions and government or with the further changes in the two-party relationship. I would like to inform the Central Committee that this Monday, the Presidential Council of the MSZMP and the general secretaries of the trade unions sat to the roundtable by the second time to carry on negotiations about the relationship of the MSZMP and the SZOT. Without giving a long and detailed account on either the first or the second round of the negotiations to the Central Committee, all I want to tell is that the second round of the negotiations was quite open and objective, moreover all of those questions that could be articulated as criticisms against each other were articulated by the negotiating partners.

At the same time it was obvious – and I believe that it is promising – that the intention and the willingness were apparent in case of both negotiating partners to come to an agreement in unsettled issues and they were trying to establish the theoretical ground on which the principles of a longer-run cooperation could be constituted.

Briefly, the two negotiating partners agreed on four issues on Monday. I guess that they will be meeting again within ten days. The first agreement is that besides the

roundtable and the trilateral negotiations our experts would start an intensive exchange of views and consultations in order to become familiar with each other's views about the present economic situation and with those questions concerning which we would be able to come to an agreement in the future and of course we are trying to reconcile our positions in the still unsettled matters.

The second set of issues we could agree upon was that the experts of the negotiating delegations would lay down a set of principles, that is, we would formulate the basic principles that would be a ground for cultivating a longer-run partnership. These principles would provide the ground for a correct cooperation between the MSZMP and the SZOT in this transitory period, exactly in relation to those issues that were brought up by some of the speakers of this session.

The third is that we would discuss separately whether there are chances for any cooperation and for establishing more concrete alliances between the MSZMP and the SZOT that would act together during the preparation for the election. And of course there are unsettled matters that should be settled in direct negotiation between the SZOT and the government. We have come to an agreement concerning this matter as well.

I found it necessary to report on these agreements because it was brought up by many participants of the discussions that they did not see whether the debate was for the debate's sake or there was any intention and thinking at all towards the direction that reasonable conditions for the cooperation be worked out between the MSZMP and the SZOT and between the SZOT and the government. I believe that there is a resolution for this cooperation, which is a good sign and I hope that in the next negotiation we will be able to come to agreement concerning more concrete issues.

I would like to make my third comment that is to a certain degree related to what I have just said, in which I want to emphasize the indispensability to deal with economic issues and the necessity that it be documented somewhere in the record of the parliament. One of the subcommittees of the committee that is in charge of 'revealing the past' – this subcommittee is led by Comrade Csaba Csáki – was trying to carry on exactly this project of disclosing the facts. This project was not documented in the records in proportion with its significance. It is true, that this matter was not even discussed by the Central Committee separately. At the same time, I believe that the characteristic questions of the present economy that we are concerned with and will have to be concerned with in the future will be included in this report.

Here I would like to add that for the September 5th meeting we will submit to the Political Executive Committee a report and account on our economical-politics concerning the period of 1990-92 and depending on the decision of the Political Executive Committee, the members of the Central Committee will be able to get acquainted with it as well. I would like to tell that there have been no decisions made yet concerning these questions, since the internal position within the party regarding some important issues that should be settled in order to be able to establish the economic-political guidelines that are necessary to make more concrete economic-political decisions. Even if we consider these facts, I still find it necessary that before the Parliament starts its sessions, the members of the Political Committee get acquainted with the results yielded by our work until now and if necessary – even if do not intend to make decisions – we should schedule a consultation about the present situation and the possible solutions. As it was expressed by some speakers in the discussion the issue of the economic situation is also important from the perspective of the scheduling of the election. The possibilities, the chances and the necessary measures concerning the economic situation have or might have an impact on our decision to designate a date for the election and they may also restrict our freedom in this decision.



Moreover, there are the political questions that are just as important as the questions regarding the economical situation that we should not put aside during the discussion.

I would like to say couple of words about the question concerning the assets of the party that became an important issue both in the session of the Central Committee and today in the media. I would not want to approach this matter as Comrade Ms. Rajki did, who emphasized that these assets belonging to the party served to satisfy the luxurious needs of certain circles. I agree that there is an aspect like this in this matter, however this is not the most characteristic aspect of it, since what we mean by the properties of the party means 2600 real estates.

In the report that we have submitted to the members of the Central Committee on the economic situation of the party we included a brief report on the party's assets as well. Since then we have prepared a catalogue and the Ministry of Finance prepared another catalogue based on the available records that could be documented correctly. I used the word 'available' since neither the party, nor other state organizations have the proper documents about the party's assets, that is, it is impossible to follow the changes in the party's financial situation – let's say – since 1948.

Based on the available documents, we can conclude that throughout 30 years the members of the party paid 20 billion Ft as membership fees. It covered the 75% of our expenses in these 30 years, the remaining 25% was partly covered from the state budget and partly was transferred to the party's account by the companies belonging to the party. Within these 30 years we spent 6 and a half billion Ft to the maintenance and running of those properties that were partly possessed by the party for a certain period of time and that we still partly use. In 1978 we transferred all of our properties to the possession of the state for which we did not get any financial compensation. That decision stated that these properties were transferred to the possession of the state, that in turn assures the right that we use these properties. [sic!]

Since 1978 the party invested 2.4 billion Ft, that is, this is the amount of money the party invested in buying new properties. From this amount of money 2.1 billion Ft was a state support. This amount of money would have yielded interests if we had kept it in banks, however a significant portion of it was spent on the maintenance of the properties. The Ministry of Finance made its own calculations independently from us and based on these calculations it may seem to be correct in economic and legal terms that we – here I have to add that the opposition does not accept this calculations arguing that it underestimates the assets of the party, in which the opposition is probably right, but now the same evaluative guideline applies for the party and the state properties, thus it does not make sense to make that distinction – would resign from the right to use our properties in a value of 2.4 billion, that is, we would transfer these right of using the properties back to the state. But we should do it only if we could get legal and political guaranties that the remaining properties or assets of the party that worth approximately 5 billion Ft will not be confiscated from it. The present rules do not provide any guaranties for it.

Concerning this matter we had consultations with the governmental offices, but for the moment we do not have a solution that would be reassuring in political terms, so that we could represent it. I would argue that postponing the decision concerning this matter that was brought up by some speakers today is not a good solution. There are political means to engulf a party in an unfavorable situation, but there are also economic means to achieve the same result. The MSZMP has only a right of use over these properties, which can be withdrawn or taken away any time based on the laws effective today. If we want to provide the conditions for the manageability of the party, then – and it can be seen from the party-law that it cannot be more than the 50% of our total expenses that we can provide

from other sources [sic!] – then we have to arrange that these properties serve the party from two perspectives.

One of the perspectives is to assure the infrastructure that is indispensable for running the party, the other is that for financial reasons we have to make the party smaller and this version of the party has to be allowed to be involved in running its own businesses. The party-law [sic!] in and of itself provides the opportunity for this. Here I would like to note that there is a particular asymmetry in the 6th article of the party-law that allows the parties to accept financial support from foreign sources. I suppose that it would be better if the law would not allow the acceptance of financial support from foreign sources, but I do not think that we could change this law if an agreement has already been made about it. What we may have to force is the other side of this issue, that is, that economic management of the organizations supported by the party should get more economic freedom. It would be reasonable since the universal economic principle do not differ at all from the economic principles of the regular economical organizations. It is not intelligible why the economic activities of the parties are restricted, since I believe that any party that is running a successful business and pays taxes like any other economical enterprise, is making profit for the state as well.

I would eliminate this asymmetry in a way that I would not exclude the party or the parties – as it is shown in the 3rd clause of the 6th article – from being able to join other economic organizations other than one-person limited liability companies. Or the law approves that a party invest into stocks, but is not supposed to invest stocks. This article does not make much sense, since it can be easily evaded. In a certain respect the same stands for it as for the financial support coming from foreign sources, since we know for sure that Western-European political parties – let it be a social democratic or a communist party – assure their financial background by running businesses or accepting financial supports from foreign sources. There are profoundly worked out paths within the international practice to clean certain sums of money and transfer them into bank accounts of parties. [sic!] Though there may be restrictions concerning these practices as well.

Now I would like to return to the question of the assets of the party. I find it important and the Central Committee has to make a decision concerning this matter. Following the laws effective today we can choose from three things. This first decision is that we will not do anything. We can afford that we would try [sic!], and we would not take any initiatives as our assets are concerned but we would just wait.

The government argues – and we may have to accept this argument – that only the new land-law will be the only frame within which we could settle the property rights of our properties. The approval of this land-law by the parliament will not happen before the next year. It is possible that only the new Parliament will deal with this bill. Consequently there is a risk factor in this decision, since we cannot tell what would the new Parliament composed of new representatives accept in this new land-law.

This position is not the best from an another perspective either: if we cannot take any benefit from our properties, then we will not be able to maintain them from our other financial sources. The position of the opposition is documented in the reports on the negotiations – this part of the document is set by a smaller font size. The opposition argues that a party can use for profit-making purposes only those properties that belong to its possession, that is, it cannot make a profit from using those properties over which it has only the right of use. The properties over which the MSZMP has only the right of use, that is, these properties cannot be used, therefore should be returned to the possession of the state. Namely, these properties must be confiscated from the MSZMP.

I believe that it becomes clear from the report we distributed to you, that the party will not have the financial means to maintain such a great number of properties. It is not even reasonable to maintain these properties. The reasonability is of secondary importance compared to the fact that the party cannot afford to maintain these properties. On the other hand we know that presently in this country there is an uncountable number of opportunities to utilize these properties such as for health care or education, etc. where the utilization of these properties would serve the nation's interests.

The second decision would be that we would confer a significant portion of these properties. I believe that it would be a good decision in case if we could get real legal guaranties. A legal guaranty like that would be that the properties that are not conferred would remain in the possession of the MSZMP and the party could perform business activities involving these properties.

The third decision that we can make is – and I would like to talk about it as well – that we make use of those legal opportunities that are available today without having the properties in our possession. The debate that evolved around the NEXT 2000 reflects an effort like this, that aimed at investing a determined part of our properties into a company (kft), properties that we were allowed to utilize for profit making purposes.

I would like to make it clear that the attempt to launch this kind of businesses was not successful. We handed in the request on the 25th of June to be able to establish a limited liability company, then we handed in a proposal for an amendment. We were doing everything in a way we were advised by experienced lawyers to evade another law – and I would like to add it clearly – meanwhile the new land-law became effective from the 1st of July that prohibits and generally prohibited that social organizations transfer properties to private ownership for this purpos and the law's coming into force applied to the ongoing businesses as well, therefore the court refused our request. [sic!]

We can wonder now, whether – while having known that this law was going to be effective – it was a reasonable suggestion of the office and our lawyers' to encourage us to make this attempt before the law comes into force, so that we may have been able to slip out of the law. We can have a debate on that and we can criticize this step. The important thing is that the process was correct from the perspective of law.

I would also like to add that in an article published in Magyar Hirlap on the 23rd of August the Independent Lawyers' Forum claimed that the business transaction was legally immaculate. That is exactly what we wanted to do, because the third version – and we have to articulate a position about this – that the Central Committee and its sub-committee that deals with these issues have to try to take a benefit of all of those legal opportunities with which we could guarantee the protection of the properties that are not in our possession. The protection gets developed that the property gets transformed to the property of an ltd., the ltd. joins another joint venture; may be some foreign capitals shows interest towards this business and in the end the property can be swallowed. I do not think that this is the nicest business transaction ever, but if we want to provide any kind of security for ourselves and if we want to avoid a situation that may evolve a year later when we would be confiscated from all of the right sto use our properties, – as it seems to me – we might have to take a step like this. How can it be done in a smarter way I do not know, but every critical comment concerning this matter – if there is any – is welcome.

Finally I would like to say [sic!]. As the preparation of the congress is concerned everything that was told by Comrade Jenő Kovács is correct and he appropriately described the situation. But I would like to tell that we have a problem with time, it is not even a small a problem for those organizations and committees that are busy with the preparation work. We have come to the time when the Central Committee has to articulate

its positions concerning some issues that may seem to be of practical nature, but these issues do have political contents and they are also needed for us to be able to carry on the organizing-preparing work. Among them there is a set of questions that will be submitted to the Central Committee on the 12th. [sic!] I myself do not see it possible that we submit again the proposal, or the documents before the 25th, but we may submit the proposal to the Central Committee. I would just mention it as a footnote that even if the Central Committee will discuss and approve this proposal on 25th we will still not be able to keep our promise towards the members of the delegation that we distribute to them the basic documents ten days before the congress.

My last brief comment is related to the party organization. I believe that the second opportunity that was described by Comrade Kilényi before is satisfying for me, because it provides the conditions to realize our former decision or position. It might also provide a possibility – and I find it very important – that the negotiating delegation continues the negotiation in this correct and not surrendering position. Thank you very much.

Document 68.  
Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee  
[Rezső Nyers on the Roundtable Negotiations  
and the Preparations for the Party Congress].  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 1, 1989.*



**Meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee**  
**[Rezső Nyers on the Roundtable Talks and the Preparations for the Party Congress].**  
Verbatim Record (Excerpts).  
September 1, 1989.

**Comrade Rezső Nyers:** Dear Comrades! As the preparatory work for the party congress is concerned I do not really have doubts about its organization-part. It seems to me that we have never had such vivid party life before any other congresses as we have now, that gives the image of a vigorous party-organization. As the agreement on the political content of the congress is concerned, I am a little concerned too, because it is obvious that there is no one shared opinion within the party either, and it is true for the party as a whole and for the members of the delegation as well.

There is a need for further discussions as this matter is concerned. I believe that it would be a good idea to discuss the proposal for the party's program not only on the 25th of September, but we should try to discuss its preliminary version in a first reading on the 12th of September. Even if we cannot discuss the full text of the proposal we should try to discuss the [political] principles – about which we might not even be able to come to an agreement after the negotiation. However it is essentially important that our position become clear until/for the congress.

In relation to the congress I believe that we have to distill our position concerning the political preliminary negotiations, the whole process of the legislation and some more emphatically emerging questions related to the society.

That is the way of handling those social conflicts that are related to an accelerated speed of a structural transformation in which the position of the MSZMP should be articulated in such way that we support the more radical steps in the transition, while we are striving at and ask the governmental organizations, the trade unions and all of the local organizations to strive at soothing those consequences resulting from these social conflicts that are to be taken by the people.

We cannot escape being a party that is making politics while taking into considerations social-political views. Some of you may argue that this is a contradiction because we have to decide which one to choose, we cannot choose both at the same time.

I learned a lot from the information – which is not too much – I received about the events in Pecs and its connections with the events happened in Ózd. As Comrade Németh evaluated it, I guess, the political situation in Ozd was prepared much more profoundly in political terms. The conflict was quite remarkable there, but that matter could be settled somehow. About the uranium mine in Pécs Mária Ormos, who is a resident of Pécs, told that there was no any news for weeks, although there was a great number of rumors. That was characteristic of the situation. That is, these cases show that there are insufficiencies in the preparation work.

I am referring to these events when I am emphasizing that the government certainly has to make clearer its intentions for social-compensation. In this world that is full of conflicts the government has to have a much better relationships with the trade unions and social conflicts have to be prevented. [sic!] We also have to prevent that many problems appear as local, unsolvable problems.

My opinion is that the relationship between the party and the trade union movements is presently problematic. It has to be settled. There is a need for a strategic alliance of the party and the trade union movement and by the latter I mean that trade union that has a membership of four million. This is a very important, long-run project.

Here the danger does not only come from the fact that the leaderships of the party and the trade unions cannot come along with each other, the cooperation between them is squeaking, but also from the fact that the trade union movement has not come to terms with itself yet, it has not been able to fully accomplish the reforms yet that must be accomplished within the trade unions. Moreover, the overcentralization within the trade unions has not been dissolved yet and the root organizations' rights and basic cooperative capabilities or power and capabilities to represent their own interests have to be improved.

There are deficiencies in the institutional organization expressing the social partnership, in which the government and the trade unions have decisive roles, but in which The Chamber of Economics and its various organizations do not have the sufficient role. The trade unions would need their presence to a greater degree.

Therefore this system of the preliminary negotiations has to be constructed again, it has to be improved which would help to improve, in turn, the relationship between the government and the trade unions. The strategic alliance has to be constructed within the new conditions as well.

In my opinion we as a party should agree to the freedom of the trade unions. We cannot resist the establishment of the alternative trade unions. We – by principle – cannot resist the establishment of workers' councils. Because may be members of the party participate within these councils as well. Though we should not confuse things while we recognize and respect the workers' councils. We have to establish some relationship with these, however this relationship should not be the same as our relationship with the trade unions. If the trade union movement revives itself, it is desirable that it integrate these smaller organizations into itself.

In my opinion we have to work out a politically convincing proposal about this strategic cooperation and about all of its problems for the congress, we have to discuss it here and then submit it to the parliament. That is all I wanted to say about this issue.

My next theme is the three party organizations. I would suggest that the Central Committee acknowledge the report of the negotiating delegation. I believe that we should not evaluate the report officially now. I think that time has not come yet for this. I myself share the opinion – and it was mentioned already by others as well – that the delegation basically did a good job and we should vote confidence for their future work.

There is only one question about which we have to make a decision now, and I would suggest that the Central Committee change its former position. Actually it was not a position, but a suggestion by Comrade Pozsgay. It would be better if the Central Committee could take the position that was suggested by Comrade Kilényi in the negotiations as the second possibility. That is, we should emphasize that the party organizations will not want to take a position in the future in the companies' management structure and will not interfere with the questions of production. That is how we could meet the basic requirement of the economic and political reform.

That is how we could make a decision that supports the reform. At the same time, we should not restrict the civil rights and the right of holding public meetings that would assure the right for the employees having a party membership to establish any kind of organization, either a party-group or a party organization. The delegation, of course, can represent the MSZMP's position such as the party will not force the maintenance of party organizations in workplaces in which the employees do not want to have them. We do not want to keep a rigid, schematic system, but we do not agree to the prohibition either. I am convinced that this is a political position, I am convinced that we can represent it and I am sure that this position will not be the reason if the negotiations with the Opposition Roundtable and the Third Side get stuck.



I would suggest that we take positions both in the middle-, and the possible upper scale negotiations that we could come to agreement about, to full agreement with both the Opposition Roundtable and the Third Side. If we cannot come to the full agreement with the other partners, then we should come to agreement in the questions in which it is possible to come to agreement. We should suggest to the delegation that it strive at working on taking a mutually tolerant position in those questions concerning which the negotiating partners could not come to full agreement and these drafts should be submitted to the government and the Parliament in a form which includes the positions of all of the three negotiating partners.

Here I have to add that there is only one set of questions in which the agreement of the Opposition Roundtable and the MSZMP will have to be overviewed and supervised by the government before it gets submitted to the Parliament. These questions are related to the army. Only the government is competent in making decisions concerning this issue. The MSZMP should not take a position concerning this issue either, since the government is bound by international agreements and contracts – or I am not even sure what Comrade Karpati called them, what sort of categories these are. This matter has to be decided upon by the government. As the other unsettled matters are concerned, the bills that are submitted to the Parliament should contain the differing opinions. The Parliament itself wants to have the right to take its own position in these matters. If we do a good job, I am convinced that, these agreements will get the approval of the Parliament. Even if we are able to come to agreements, we will have to fight in the Parliament to get these agreements approved, but the legal authority of the Parliament cannot be left aside and questioned.

I would like to emphasize here that the parliamentary fraction of the MSZMP expressed its desire that the Parliament be not considered as a voting machine in these matters. We can solve this problem if before making conclusions from the trilateral negotiations we get acquainted with and take into account the position of the parliamentary fraction of the party and that of the other fraction . We either have to convince them or have a discussion with them.

My opinion is that in the future negotiations we should not compromise as the “fundamental” laws (all of them) are concerned. I believe that in the present stage we have to argue even for the establishment of the Constitutional Court. The negotiation has not achieved a stage yet, in which we could compromise in all of the unsettled matters. We should hold on to the position that the institution of the president of the republic should be established earlier, so that it could be included in the present draft of amendment. We should not make any compromise on that. Our goal should be that even before the election [sic!].

Then we will have to maneuver that might result in that we cannot finish the negotiations before the election. It is important from the perspective of the peaceful transition that we have the institution of the president of the republic. What is the interest of the MSZMP is that the president of the republic be one of the members of the MSZMP. In the present situation Imre Pozsgay should be appointed as the president of the republic. This is the interest of the MSZMP. However, the debate is not about this. The debate is about whether there is a need for a president of the republic and whether this person should be elected by referendum. We should get confused by the position of those who accuse us all the time with not being democratic and who want to hold referendums all the time. It is curious that as this matter is concerned, they forget about the referendum.

We should not be confused by that. We have to represent our interest bravely and firmly. I would like to emphasize it here that the MSZMP has to handle an inner crisis, that is, we have a lot of problems. Our sympathy-index is not too high, though the sympathy-

indices of alternative organizations are not high either, they are decreasing day by day. The television contributes to lower these indexes. In this respect the television supports us indirectly. But this is not the most important issue, it is not worth measuring the sympathy-indices all the time. However big crisis we have, we should not start out from the position that our party is weak. It is not true that we are weak, because the opposition is afraid of us, that is, they are afraid of us because we have power. They accuse us of wanting to reestablish the former political structure and of wanting to apply violence in order to be able to do so. Although they do know that we are not able to do so and we would not even want to apply violence and that is why they recognize that the MSZMP has power. We should utilize this power.

I would suggest that we continue fighting for an election that is rescheduled to an earlier date. As this question is concerned, the opinions are different. Some argue that the election should be held later. I believe that we should accept and support the position of our own leadership and if our leaders say that the election should be held earlier, then that should be our position as well and the election has to be held the earlier the better. It is not sure, that we can get through our position.

In my personal opinion we have to accept the criticism coming from the Third Side. The course of the negotiations almost spontaneously took the turn that both the MSZMP and the Oppositions Roundtable underestimated the Third Side. It is even more characteristic of the Opposition, since they consciously underestimated and did not trust the Third Side from the very first moment of the negotiations. But we found ourselves in a position as well that we were too much involved in the discussions with the Opposition and neglected the Third Side. We have to pay more attention on this matter in the future. We cannot make decisions as the position of the Third Side is concerned. The Third Side has to make decisions by itself even there is a certain number of communists among them. I suggest that we acknowledge the position of the Third Side as its own. We should not decide in the matter that the Third Side wants to participate in the election independently. There is nothing we could change about it.

This is a vicious circle for the Third Side as well, I accept that. Here it returns that we did not fight for hard enough. Although may be, even if we had fought, we could not have got through the two-house parliament, could not have got recognized the necessity for the house of the self-governing organizations. I am convinced that there is a need for the house of the self-governing organizations in a country that recognizes itself as socialist and that is aware that there is a need for multiparty system to operate a good political system. Without a house of the self-governing organizations, even if there are many parties in the Parliament the interests of the society cannot be represented. The interests that would be represented by the self-governing organizations are very important interests. We could not come to an agreement with the other partners concerning this issue in the negotiations. The other partners believe that we want to take an advantage out of it. This debate certainly had the aspect that the negotiating partners did not trust us. And we have to take the consequences now.

I do accept that it does not make much sense in legal terms – it is not reasonable – to establish a two-house parliamentary system if the parliament is not based on a one-party system, but a multiparty system. In a multiparty system it does not make much sense to have a section in the parliament that does not have any party affiliation. All I can add is that it is quite common worldwide that in transitory periods there are transitory solutions/organizations that do not have a clear legal status.

It is not a sacrilegious solution if it is what the political situation necessitates. All I want to argue for that this initiative of the Third Side should not be ignored as something that does not make sense, absurd, therefore does not even have to be discussed.

Finally I would like to return to the party. I believe that the party has to strengthen its connection with especially two layers: the blue collar workers and the agricultural cooperatives. I would suggest to the Central Committee to think about establishing sections for the blue collar and the agricultural workers. We have to return to this matter later. It was initiated in Debrecen and I find it reasonable. I believe that this move would make our party stronger. These formations should be operated as sections. After all, we cannot be but a workers' party. If we keep our name, we cannot become anything else, but a workers' party. Especially if we are a party in governing position. We have to become the people's party. Although we should not pay a particular attention to the workers and the agricultural cooperatives – the latter being born by the socialism. We do not have to feel shame about it, we have to get through reforms, it serves the interest of the whole nation. (sic!)

Finally I have to make a comment about the internal affairs of the party. We will have to look forward to the evaluation of ourselves. It is not only the party that will be evaluated, but also the members of the party separately. All of us will receive criticisms, we have already received criticisms, some of us will be elected and some of us will not. We have to accept that. It is a regular situation, it can happen any time to any politician. Our situation is not regular though, since it became a fight in which we attack and we are attacked.

In the past, before the May of 1988 those members who took a reformist position were neglected and even offended. That was bad. This was not only bad, but it was a mistake. As I see some of these reform forces, reformists are turning against us now. There is suspicion and a lack of confidence within the party and many times these reformists attack those other members that do not even deserve it.

It is even more disgusting if a person accuses another member of the party who has already accused him/her back because he/she had been accused him/her first. It does happen in the life of a party. However, it is presently very dangerous. The Opposition and even more the enemy got surprised when I used the term "enemy" in Tata. There is an enemy now: those who are anti-Communists, or anti-Semites, or anti-Soviet are our political enemies. We will treat them differently, we could not afford to treat them as we used to treat them before. We cannot even treat them as our opposition who was simply expelled from the party. But we have an enemy inside the party. These people are contributing to creating an atmosphere of attacks and counter-attacks and they strive at divide the party. We have to defend ourselves from these efforts. We have to represent the position – and we should not be afraid of that – that this party become a reform party. This party can be turned to be a reform party as the majority of its membership is concerned and we have to get rid of the extremities. We should not exclude them, but we should conduct a politics that they resign from their membership by themselves.

I do not believe in the bluff of that person named Petres that there are 23 members of the Central Committee present and I do not know how many county secretaries, may be seven, (interruptions: there are not less) who gravitate towards his party and who have already bound themselves to the party, and they are waiting now to be able to enter his party. This is a bluff. We should not even deal with these mindless imaginings. Although we would like to ask everyone who does not agree with us in political terms – which position is absolutely acceptable – that the disagreeing person should tell it to us and should resign from his/her party membership.

I do not think that we have to deal with this question any further. I believe that we, here in the Central Committee, can trust each other fully. We can trust each other in political terms, but we do not need to trust each other as other issues are concerned, we may have different opinions about these issues and we have to discuss these.

As the unity and the level of our present leadership is concerned, the present leadership is a temporary one and it stands for the Presidential Board and the Political Executive Committee as well. I would like to say, Comrades, that this leadership is effective. We make mistakes, but we are still effective. We make mistakes because we cannot fully cooperate with each other.

As a president, since I am a young president, but an old tennis player, I am making mistakes in coordinating. But I guess that everyone else would make the same mistakes. These mistakes do not serve enough reason to doubt that we can arrange the congress sufficiently with the present leadership. To say couple of words about the sessions of the Political Executive Committee: in the beginning, in the summer there was not a really intensive work conducted, this work was getting intensified recently. I have a good opinion on the work of the Political Executive Committee: we are carrying on vivid, good, open and objective negotiations according to our best knowledge and the level itself is not so bad. We promise, that within this very short period that is left we will try to correct, if we can, the mistakes in coordination and I would like to ask you all to trust in ourselves.

Document 69.

Telex from State Secretary Bertele to Head of Chancellery Office, Berlin  
[East-German Citizens in Hungary].

*September 1, 1989.*



**Telex from State Secretary Bertele to Head of the Chancellery Office, Berlin (East)**  
**[GDR Citizens in Hungary]**  
September 1, 1989

Re: GDR Citizens who want to leave the country  
Situation in Hungary and in the Permanent Mission

I have learned the following from the Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires Szatmari about the course and contents of yesterday's visit of Hungarian Foreign Minister Horn to Berlin (East):

In the course of the conversation, the viewpoints on the departure of GDR citizens from Hungary did not get any closer. Foreign Minister Fischer urged that Hungary agree to a solution similar to that which had been found for the refugees in the Permanent Mission here in Berlin. There – so Fischer stated – conversations took place “today” with the refugees in which R A [*Rechtsanwalt*] Vogel and State Secretary Priesnitz from Bonn took part. Fischer then described the arrangements of the solution a key point of which was that the refugees in the GDR had to return to East Germany and there, with legal help, they could pursue their individual exit visas. This should also be the core of a solution for the Germans in Hungary. Foreign Minister Horn denied that the problems were comparable. In the course of the conversation he said that for the 5,000, 10,000, or 15,000 GDR citizens (he did not have exact numbers) who did not want to return to the GDR, such a solution was out of the question. The Hungarian problem had another dimension and another quality and therefore had to be solved differently. I also stressed repeatedly to the Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires that in our view the situation of the refugees in the Permanent Mission and the situation of GDR citizens in Hungary who did not want to return to the GDR were not comparable. My Hungarian counterpart shares this view. In the course of the conversation, Foreign Minister Fischer emphasized that it was not their intent to restrict travel to Hungary from the GDR. My conversation partner commented on this with the skeptical remark that, because the travel season ended in September, we could not get any assurances that this statement would be observed.

In the course of the previous days, the fact that I have not been informed on events in Hungary proved disadvantageous. Since the next days will be very critical in Hungary as well as Berlin, I request timely reporting on events in Hungary.

Bertele

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Translated by  
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Document 70.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 4, 1989.*



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
September 4, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**József Antall:** In the meantime MSZMP has changed the position put forth by its delegation, and at other workplaces it makes the functioning of the parties possible, and by this they want to keep MSZMP...

We should ask the delegation of MSZMP, whose leader now is member of the government, to say now – in case he can – or next time what was and what is the position of the government on this issue, since the bill will be submitted by the government, and furthermore it is the government that is responsible for the economic life of the country and the order at the workplaces, so we should ask him if the government endorses this move which will result in disorganization. [...]

It is in principle a feasible compromise if – belonging to a party being a fundamental human right – the leaders and the employees decide together at a workplace whether they wish to have political parties inside the gates or not.

[...]

**Károly Vigh:** ... If we represent a position now with respect to party organizations at the workplaces saying that it has to be decided by those involved, the employees, that they should be called to vote whether they want party organizations at their workplace or not, I believe it will definitely be decided in our favor, and at the same time it is also obvious that this opposition proposal will bring us some popularity.

[...]

**Sándor Keresztes:** ... For the statements we can hear in the radio or the television also show that a completely new situation will occur in October, so in a month. The question is who will be our negotiating partner? Whether we are going to have one at all? Therefore I could fully endorse the infusion [sic] of the government into this, for when Miklós Németh administered the oath to the members of the new government in the Parliament, he announced that this government would only be responsible to the Parliament, not to the party, and at that time it was already evident: the Opposition Roundtable should have taken up the position that a new situation had arisen, and MSZMP was just one party among many, rather than the party in power.

Now, I think what we should weigh now is that it is indeed the government that will submit the bill to the Parliament, and the Parliament will vote on it, and those who were here last time at the meeting could see that its representative is perhaps more flexible than that of MSZMP, and they may have a stronger feeling of responsibility. [...] So under these circumstances, when Pozsgay himself said yesterday that though his mandate had been extended, but any time something might happen ... the same thing can happen again that his mandate is restricted and it turns out that ... it becomes questionable who is entitled to negotiate.

[...]

**István Gaskó:** ... our original agreement was that as a starting point we demand that at the elections, or until the time of the elections the organizations of MSZMP must withdraw from the workplaces, and backing up into a compromise can extend up the one month before the elections. So the original position is the time the elections are called.

**József Antall:** ... in the case of Nyers it is conceivable that he has a social democratic view on it, or the like, that the parties can be maintained, but I don't think he sticks so much to the social democratic traditions. (*Laugh.*) I tend to believe more that by this move he intended to win the support of the party functionaries, the support of the core of the party comprising the party apparatus. (*Károly Vigh: That's right.*) It was a gesture. Now then, this next step, which we can consider even over the talks, as to when we should throw in this question, to propose that in that case we find it feasible, but the whole thing will come into force in conjunction. That's what I think, I wonder if the question ... (*To János Kis:*) What is your question?

**János Kis:** My question is whether the end of the text confirms our position that they should leave the workplaces by all means one month before the elections?

**József Antall:** By all means.

[...]

**Sándor Bejczy:** ... when we consider that the companies, the employees have to be called to vote, then we have to consider it very carefully whether to throw this in as a compromise or not. I will tell you why. The companies work so much under the control of MSZMP that I just don't believe that if a committee was formed, well, then it would present a clear picture in some way. The employees of companies are either party members or they are not involved in politics. You should be aware of that.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... we might figure out thousands of compromise solutions here but it won't push us through this point. MSZMP obviously won't make any concession on this, and I believe it's about time we made a clean breast of it, for we will to submit this proposal, and Pozsgay will say – I guess – that it is a new proposal, we should go home and reconsider it in the committee. So we just put it off again, and it will go on like this till the end of time, if we don't try to take up some kind of a final position on it.

[...]

**László Salamon:** I think we should be thinking in terms of searching for a compromise, for the imminent split in the party makes me draw two conclusions. One is that we have to bring the talks to an agreement – the trilateral talks – as long as MSZMP still exists, because if we have two of them, then it is hard to see at the moment which one will be our partner and how they will shape the political conditions. What is more, perhaps it should also be passed by the Parliament, for if MSZMP is split into two, I just wonder which party can have an effect on the Parliament and get it to enforce the results of the trilateral negotiations.

Now, this much concerns the question in general. I would endorse the compromise proposal, even if there were several places where the parties should continue to function. I'm convinced that under secret voting several workplaces would be lost for the party... But what we can definitely do, and we have to do, which would be a very shrewd idea, or attitude, is to say that we – the organizations in the Opposition Roundtable – have a strict, principled position which we regard as a tough position. We would not really want to make a concession on it. There is, however, another consequence of these trilateral talks which simply forces all the parties including us to make a compromise for the sake of public agreement and the democratic transition.

[...]

**János Kis:** ... The crucial question is whether they insist on leaving one month before the elections. Then there is really nothing to vote on for the workers of companies.

Now, beyond the objections brought up here so far there is another problem with the proposal, I just note I largely agree with them. Namely, it is not sure if it is accord with the company law that is in force. As Jóska Antall has said, the foreign candidates for ownership stipulated in a contract that no MSZMP organization, or an organization of any other party, can function at companies which will be owned fully or partially by them, and this is no accident. This is a right of the owner to specify that, and this right cannot be evaded by a voting of the workers.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... the only question that remains open now is what exactly our position should be which we take there. There is consensus in that we can not back up on it more than to thirty days before the elections, the last time they have to leave the workplaces. If I understood it well, then the question is open from here as to what we should start with, considering how far we are willing to back up. There are two proposals. János Kis suggested we should start out with a tough – if I'm not mistaken –... (*Correction is made.*) or the proposal of SZDSZ that we should open the talks with a tough position; MDF proposed we should start by saying that there will be one month for the elections in this issue. These are the two proposals. Am I right about that? [...]

**János Kis:** ... The difference, the new element in it is that it does not explicitly contain how far we want to back up, (*Viktor Orbán: It's clear.*) and we indicate that it's not our final position.

**Viktor Orbán:** Right, if I translate it into my own technical language, then it means, sorry, that we go in, we will say that our proposal is that ninety days before the elections [the workplaces] must be left, then MSZMP will say something to it, we ask for some time, and then say that our final decision is thirty days. Do I get it right? Is that it? (*József Antall: that is good, right.*) Well, then that's what is going to happen.

[...]

**László Bruszt:** ... The way I see it is that there is a sharp difference of opinion within MSZMP between the negotiating delegation and the Friday ad hoc meeting of the CC. The negotiating delegation of MSZMP would like to go further and believes that this thing

could be decided in the Parliament. They expect that they will be able to change the decision through the Parliament, contrary to the position taken by the CC. I don't see why we could not give it a try and say we can not come to a compromise on this, we want to leave it open, though we don't intend to subordinate the agreement on other issues of the elections, or the ones concerning the legal regulation and financing of the political parties to this decision, so we don't make them dependent on it, we leave it open because we stick with our original position, and the Parliament should decide on it. This is my proposal, we should take this position.

[...]

**György Szabad:** ... If we harden our position, it means that they may stiffen their own with good reason, for they can say: well, were we not right after all, who can talk with these guys? They wouldn't change their position. If we bring in a new element now, which, as János Kis rightly said, does not involve any significant change, we may indeed – I dare to say the word – facilitate their split. And perhaps we can have an influence on the motion of the intermediary element. For obviously those who said no are in majority now because they could win the support of the trash by saying that this proposal goes well beyond anything that is reasonable. [...] Pressure – this is big politics now – is indispensable for us. In case of a crisis any motion has the effect of splitting. It can split the one that is in a crisis, and if we can throw in a new element which does not involve any significant risk for us, then why should we not make the best of this opportunity?

[...]

**István Gaskó:** ... there is an extremely serious risk in implementing the proposal of MDF, for in case of a voting like this the opposition is bound to lose. At the moment our position is that no party organizations should function at the workplaces, and it is obvious that if it comes to voting, the opposition should make a concession on it, because surely there will be some places where the party organizations will be allowed to stay after the voting.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** ... I just want to bring up the question whether it is sure that voting does not involve any risks for us. Without siding with any view. I believe it is not, for three reasons. Not only because MSZMP is present now at the workplaces, or because the workers might feel threatened, but for other reasons as well. There are many indifferent people who don't want to get involved in this thing, and the voting results will be very different from what the position of the society might really be. So if only 50% of the people cast their vote, the influence of MSZMP within this population might be very strong; and there is another kind of position that we have to reckon with, namely, that there is a lot of animosity towards MSZMP which may also drive some people to vote for the presence of parties at the workplace. So not everybody may accept our position, some might think that the best way to hit MSZMP is to have us at the workplace as well... [...] If there are just a few hundred people voting for the presence of parties at the workplace, then the Parliament will never have a chance to decide on it, but it will have to be decided by a referendum, which is contrary to our position – at least to our present position.

[...]

Document 71.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 4, 1989.*





**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

September 4, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** In the view of the Opposition Roundtable, the Constitution of Hungary should at last be a Constitution of a constitutional state. And as such, it should not reflect human values, basic principles of social movements, it should rather reflect basically the procedures that guide the way politics is done in a democratic constitutional state. The way political wills can be generated, can be expressed, can collide, and can become public will and as such, can be legally executed.

In the Opposition Roundtable's view, all that considered, values and ideological theses, like socialism or civic values simply have no function in the Constitution in a political sense. That is to say, it would be the best to omit both groups of values: socialist and civic values alike. Nevertheless, we have taken notice of the compromise proposal of the MSZMP who find it important to record socialist values. The Opposition Roundtable aims at a peaceful transition, therefore it accepts the value theses that are of vital importance for the other negotiating partners. In this case, however, we are obliged to insist on recording civic values as well, and recording them as equal.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Naturally, the delegation of the MSZMP had known from the beginning that the problem is not of legal theoretical nature, we had been certain of that all through; we had not seen any hindrances of either constitutional or legislative nature. I would like to say – another inadmissible thing – that I am not one of those believers who are convinced that any social formation can be realised merely by being recorded in a constitution. That has never happened in history.

That is to say, we are talking about our citizens and about the principle – and I agree with Péter Tölgyessy here – that the Constitution should be a statute that can obtain the support of all citizens. And once we have eliminated from this Constitution the possibility of arousing fear by listing socialism in the provisions, we should not incorporate in it the possibility of arousing fear in hundreds of thousands of people by omitting the word 'socialism' altogether from this Constitution.

[...]

**Béla Rabi:** The Third Side still does not wish to argue for or against incorporating socialism in the Constitution. I would like to comment, however, that we have accepted that it should be included in the preamble. At the same time, I would like to call the attention of our negotiating partners to the fact that when we sat down to negotiate, particularly when we sat down to modify the Constitution, we agreed that we would create a provisional constitution; that is to say, we are not pretending to be a constitutional assembly, we are rather creating a constitution for the transition period until the new Parliament assembles.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** I can only answer with one sentence to the problem raised by the Third Side, which will partly be an answer to the position of the delegation of the MSZMP as well. It is obvious that we have to modify the Constitution only to facilitate peaceful transition. I believe Imre Pozsgay that in this country there are some people – or maybe hundreds of thousands of them – who would be filled with terror on not seeing the word ‘socialism’ in the Constitution. I would like to call the attention of both partners, however, to the fact that in this country there are also some people – in fact, in my opinion there are several millions of them – who would be filled with terror on seeing it there. That is why we consider this a very important question from the point of view of the transition. In my view, we are not splitting hairs about legal theories; we are rather talking about the issue of formulating the Constitution, which is very important from the point of view of the peaceful transition.

[...]

**The Speaker:** The third problem that the Opposition Roundtable proposed for discussion is that of ownership forms. I am asking the delegation of the MSZMP. Or should we ask the Opposition Roundtable to expose the problem? Would the representative of the Opposition Roundtable please explain their opinion?

**Viktor Orbán:** If we recall what was said at the previous meeting, we will find that the MSZMP and the Opposition Roundtable agreed in this matter. It was the Third Side that considered it to be of vital importance that the Constitution should include the formulation that public ownership should have a favoured status. That is to say, the dispute is not between the Opposition Roundtable and the MSZMP; we are discussing the position of the Third Side.

[...]

**Béla Rabi:** [...] In our opinion, the wording of paragraph 9 should be as follows: ‘The economy of Hungary is a market economy, utilising the benefits of planning as well, with a determining role of the state and social forms (co-operative, self-administrative, of the local government) of public property.’ Indent (2): ‘Public property and private property have equal rights and receive equal protection.’ Indent (3): ‘The Republic of Hungary acknowledges and supports the right to enterprise and the freedom of competition on the basis of the principle of neutrality in competition.’

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** [...] in the economy of a country that declares itself a market economy, it is irrelevant to differentiate ideologically between forms of ownership in the context of civil law. Big civil codes simply do not make a difference between ownership forms in this sense. At the market, on the stock exchange it does not matter whether a sack of corn was grown on a state farm or on a small farmer’s land, market economy neutralises that. [...] That is to say, on the one hand we theoretically reject the suppositions of the Third Side; on the other hand, we would consider any differentiation problematic also on the basis of neutrality in competition. The economy of a state that distinguishes certain forms

of ownership and considers others to be secondary can not be called a market economy. Such an economy is not a market economy.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** The delegation of the MSZMP thinks that the Opposition Roundtable and the MSZMP have agreed, and we do not wish to change our position.

[...]

**György Drucker:** [...] If I have to answer to my dear colleague, Mr. Tölgyessy, I have to say that this is one of the existing positions concerning, so to say, civil law, moreover, in fact it is a rather extreme liberal position, which is not applied in hardly any bourgeois Constitution in such an absolute form. In the same way as the majority of bourgeois constitutions protect the intactness of private property, it is only justified that we wish to protect public property to some extent.

I would like to stress that the following is at stake. The Opposition Roundtable also wished to include in the first chapter of the Constitution the freedom to found parties, which is – admittedly – in conflict with political law, in order to encourage the population to participate in free elections through including this declarative element of campaigning in the Constitution. We did not oppose because we considered their intention to be legitimate. We think that the Opposition Roundtable can accept our intention to protect public property in the same way. We are not acting on the grounds of state socialism – and that is explicit in the text –, we would rather influence events towards collective ownership. And you probably also know that the present wave of privatisation does not only threaten the collectivized forms of public property but also those forms of state ownership that ensure the normal functioning of the state.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** It has been said that our position is an extremist liberal one. I would disagree. It is true that bourgeois constitutions do not include exactly the same as what is written down here. In bourgeois constitutions it is often stated that ownership entails obligations, it has certain social limitations. That, however, does not mean listing different forms of ownership and providing privileges to some of them. [...] It would be useful to clarify legal definitions of ownership, which would make it possible for us to orientate ourselves in legal issues like the one raised by Next 2000 Ltd., that is, the issue of co-operatives, local governments, etc.



Document 72.  
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Executive Committee.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 5, 1989.*



## Meeting of the MSZMP Political Executive Committee

September 5, 1989

Verbatim Record of Minutes

[Subject:] **Report on the political conciliatory negotiations**

**Imre Pozsgay:** [...] I would like to talk about the situation that emerged after the meeting of the CC and also about the lessons of yesterday's talks and the prospects for the future.

However strange it sounds, to begin with I'm glad to say that despite the sharp, often loud tone of the debate and some provocative remarks, restraint gained the upper hand at the roundtable talks in that the threat made earlier that they would break off the negotiations if the CC of MSZMP maintained its position on the party organizations at the workplace because the negotiations would thus be hopeless and agreement would be impossible, so this threat was not carried out, no such blackmailing, forcing statement was made, so formally the debate started with resuming the agenda broken off before, though certain "retaliatory" moves, with an obvious propagandistic aim, did show up at the negotiating table, one of which was that the Opposition Roundtable made its spokesman one of its most radical members, and its chairman FIDESZ, or personally Viktor Orbán.

In addition they wanted to impose certain issues on the agenda before starting to discuss the items on it which did not belong there either according to the basic agreement or based on any other political considerations. From this point of view one thing could not be avoided, but I have to say we had expected it, we had been ready for it, I will say more on this later, but the most important, I say, the most propagandistic statement concerned the Ferenc Münnich Society as a negotiating partner questioning how the society could reconcile its presence at the talks with the fact that certain local organizations of it openly called for using force and under the pretext of protecting their power they maintain a violent position that runs contrary to the present political endeavors. By the way, such views, unfortunately, did surface occasionally, but only in local organizations, not at the official national meetings of the Ferenc München Society. We managed to head off this issue, in the first place by making it clear that we also had a few documents in our hand showing that the members organizations of the Opposition Roundtable display a sharpening anti-Communist tone and political attitude at every step which do not fit the atmosphere of the negotiations, to which they gave the usual answer that they do not have the same centralized infrastructure and communication system with the help of which they could moderate their own member organizations, but the fact is that this issue was raised, it was brought up and finally we managed to have it removed from the agenda and we did not discuss it then.

Then we made some changes in the order of items on the agenda, it was a common interest, and instead of taking the issues of information policy we resumed the talks on the preparation, the modification of the constitution and on the party bill. As for the issue of the constitution, regardless of the fact that the press now underestimate the result achieved there, perhaps for the lack of sufficient information, I believe we have made considerable progress. On the one hand, even if it appears to be a dogmatic dispute, I still have to say that it was important for us to include democratic socialism in the modified constitution, though they questioned its significance from the very beginning, moreover, they insisted that no constitutional state should subscribe to such a declaration; eventually, as interpreted by today's papers, they agreed to the part referring to democratic socialism in the framework of a formula, and that in the normative text of the constitution, so we don't

have to attach a preamble to the modified constitution. I consider this to be a major progress and believe that it was important for us, both from a national and from an international points of view.

We also managed to exclude a problem from the dispute over the preparation of the constitution involving an apparently unfeasible solution, this is the issue of the coat-of-arms, and we succeeded by a compromise solution – let me then say this much now – in that everybody agreed that we cannot officially keep the present coat-of-arms after the constitution has been modified. However, no legislator can take the risk to give a provisional coat-of-arms to the nations, there is nothing like this in history, not to speak of the somewhat profane thing that in addition to spending hundreds of millions of forints on letterheads and seals how many other costs are incurred by this decision, so we agreed – not at the negotiating table, but first in a “backstage” meeting attended by experts – to use what we have now for the time being, and we also agreed to propose a separate, constitutional bill on the use of the coat-of-arms in which the legislators will propose alternatives to the public a national referendum should decide what it should be like, and thus the whole issue is not involved in the new constitutional process, neither in the modification of the constitution, so it is removed from the range of political issues to be discussed.

**Rezső Nyers:** So a separate referendum, the date of which, it ...

**Imre Pozsgay:** A separate referendum, there is no decision, it can be in the middle of next year...

**Rezső Nyers:** Since it is kept for the time being, there is no problem.

**Imre Pozsgay:** So essentially Hungary will not have a coat-of-arms in the new modification of the constitution, but there [will] be a reference to a separate law which will provide for the use of the coat-of-arms, and until then the one we have now will be used. Of course, the questions that are still pending are the most important ones, but I believe we have made some progress in this respect too in that we have reached an agreement in principle on the institution of the president and the Constitutional Court which will be included in the modified constitution. For the starting point of the opposition was that this institution should be discussed only by the new parliament, so the modified constitution should not contain even a single reference to it, it will be the task of the new Parliament, the freely elected house to define the constitutional form of the country and the institution of the president.

However, they made an offer at the previous meeting to use the Act I of 1946 on the president, the institution of the president as a basis for negotiations, following several studies made by experts and preliminary consultations, including talks with the minister of justice, and we made a statement yesterday that we accepted the spirit and the basic intentions of Act I of 1946, since it corresponds to a so-called president of medium power lying somewhere in between the French and the Finnish presidential institutions with the provision that a modernized version of it, including the international changes that have taken place since then – for we have talked about it at the meeting of the CC too, Hungary was officially an occupied country in 1946 – so a modified, modernized version of it [will be used], including the office of the commander-in-chief of the army and, contrary to the 1946 law, the election of the president by referendum, in the form of advanced presidential elections, before the parliamentary elections.



So in these two issues they accepted the amendment concerning the office of the commander-in-chief of the army but – of course this is the most important point for us too – we could not make a decision on the timing and the way of voting of the presidential elections. I'm informed through informal channels, through connections with certain members of the Opposition Roundtable and from other sources that we will perhaps be able to make an agreement as early as Wednesday in these two matters by a compromise expected and approved by us earlier – in case they accept the referendum as a one-time solution for electing the president, and in return we will propose that further issues should be settled in the new constitution which on the one hand will not question the role of the new Parliament in settling this issue and on the other it will not seem to (*Rezső Nyers: So to facilitate the transition.*) in order to facilitate the transition for the first five years, by means of direct election, a referendum.

The other thing. As for the date, if there will be parliamentary elections in the foreseeable future – we will have to talk about it separately later – then we can agree that this day should be the last day of the presidential elections. We hope restraint will prevail in this matter too, because it would be better to put it forward on the basis of consensus.

As for the constitution the codification of the Constitutional Court and the act regulating its operation seem to be an issue which could be acceptable to the opposition in a compromise version, namely, that this institution should be established by the modification of the constitution and enacting the Constitutional Court Law. This, by the way, was included in the modification of the constitution already in January when the constitution was modified, so that this institution should be established, the judges nominated so that a Court with 11 judges could be set up and function, for the time being, I believe, with five judges. [B]ut there is one thing they requested, which I think can be granted – since the judges will be appointed by the Parliament – so they request that they should have a word on it, the representatives of the Opposition Roundtable, well, they will give their opinion whether the nominees are suitable to the office, this, by the way, could not be prevented anyway, so it's better to accept their proposal.

I only wanted to tell you the most important points on these issues. As for the party law there will be a dispute over three main groups of questions, but as it turned out – though they brought it up in a rather confused style involving three different speakers – they considered it to be a package, namely, the issue of local organizations at the workplace included in the party law. The big question for us in the first place is the issue of party units at other workplaces, they presented their arguments, well, these arguments were also brought up here, I don't want to recall all of them now. The Opposition Roundtable is unbending on this issue for the time being, in that it maintained that this issue could not be referred back to the level of expert negotiations but it would have to be raised again at the plenary session – on Wednesday – because it is not a matter for experts, they are right about that, by the way, it is not, and they do not wish to make an agreement on this issue. If there is any way-out here towards a solution, and there seems to be one, for it was suggested by the words and the ideas which were not always put into action that if we stuck with the resolution of the CC, then the whole concept would have to be reworked and presented again on Wednesday, including any new ideas concerning the date of leaving the workplace.

According to news coming from the radical wing the radical wing of the Opposition Roundtable is not willing to make any concessions. And then comes the question they put to me there as to what the opinion of the government as a codifying body is about the resolution of the CC, and what it will do in case there is no agreement on this issue. The question was personally addressed to me that I should say something also as a

representative of a codifying body. Just among ourselves I can say that I had known in advance that the question would be put to me, we had expected it, therefore we formed our own opinion on it at the morning cabinet meeting, but there was nothing to urge me to respond to this question yesterday, all the more so because if I had, I would have revealed that I had already expected this question. The cabinet took up a position saying that the government would still submit the party bill, but it will naturally present both positions, and the representatives of the Parliament should decide on the issue. This can only be done as long as MSZMP has majority in the Parliament, so I will give my answer to the question with this background and with all this in mind at the Wednesday meeting.

Finally, the issue of the party assets. And as for deadlines and attitudes, I have to add on more things, namely that the Third Party announced neutrality concerning the local party organizations at the workplace, but it agrees with the views of the Opposition Roundtable. As for functions fulfilled by members of the armed forces in parties the Third Party also agrees with the Opposition Roundtable in that it should be declared in the law that no member of the armed forces can fulfill any elected function in any party. Based on a previous authorization we made a compromise proposal that they should not fulfill any function in national electing bodies, and based on a tacit agreement I can add to it that members of the armed forces should perhaps not fulfill an elected function in regional, county bodies. In addition, they want to link leaving the workplaces, at places where MSZMP agreed to the principle, to the time of the elections, but the time of the elections was not raised, we however should, I believe, discuss this issue today in order to formulate our position, because it will have a considerable influence on what we can do at the negotiations as well as on the codification and submission of the bills.

I want to say though that the codification is independent, in some sense independent of the issue as to when we can make an agreement on the date of the elections, it would be good to have it concluded, settled in the course of the September – October session of the Parliament. On the one hand because the guarantees are all included in this package and its principles have been approved of by the Central Committee. On the other hand, and I would like to inform the Political Executive Committee about this as well, the propaganda, the atmosphere in the press surrounding the talks, the statements in the press all bring us to a disadvantageous position, despite of all the efforts to present our arguments. So day after day we give advantage to the opposition, for the negotiations are public, in order to present their propagandistic views – and they don't miss out on any chance – openly to the public, not that our arguments were weak, it's only that the confidence towards us is weaker than would be necessary to appreciate our arguments, so I want to call the attention of the Executive Committee to this point.

At the same time the negotiating committee is determined to continue, to work hard. As for the codification and the submission of bills I think we should stick with the principle that the negotiations should be brought to an agreement within a limited term, but if there is no agreement in one or another issue, the government should still bring the bills to the Parliament, because the opposition has already started working on the House, this is another thing I want to inform the Executive Committee about. The Opposition Roundtable met with the officials of the Parliament and the heads of the committees, who then reported on these talks as having been characterized by good spirit, so in this good spirit they now propose that the heads of the parliamentary committees and representatives of the House who are interested should also take part in the negotiations. Of these proposals we fully agreed to the one allowing the heads of committees to participate in case the Speaker of the House gives his consent to it – all the more so because this could not be prevented anyway – but we definitely objected to turning the negotiations into a

parliamentary arena, and therefore we rejected the participation of members of Parliament.

**Rezső Nyers:** In what capacity would the heads ...?

**Imre Pozsgay:** As speakers of the Parliament, heads of parliamentary committees ...

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, but what sort of power should they...?

**Imre Pozsgay:** As observers, that is, not as participants of the negotiations, but only as observers.

**Rezső Nyers:** All right.

**Imre Pozsgay:** We agreed on this, I also gave an account of meeting MSZMP MPs and said we could by no means draw an optimistic picture of the situation, that is the situation in the Parliament, for maybe we make preparations here not for a peaceful transition but rather for an ex lex state of affairs which will lead straight to a dictatorship because if members of Parliament, humiliated in the self-esteem and in their role feeling that they don't have a role to fulfill, may come to a decision to resign their seat, especially with respect to the fact that the recalling of representatives continues, etc. etc., and they accepted it, though they did not reflect on it. Well, this is the account I can give you about the situation at the moment. I believe that on Wednesday we can expect further results at the negotiations.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, thank you. Comrade Fejti.

**György Fejti:** [...] in case we want the elections in December, it is unavoidable that the congress should deal with the issues of the elections and the election program in a direct fashion. It is inescapable because after the congress there would be no possibility to do so even physically for we cannot set up the leading bodies of the party. So there are some uncertain points, there are optimistic prognoses, as well as plainly pessimistic ones, especially concerning the programs in the weekend, the tone of these programs and reactions to be observed there.

However, it seems to be sure that in its present state MSZMP is not prepared to fight a competitive election battle, and it is a scrap of comfort that the other parties aren't prepared either. There are operations going on everywhere, at an increasingly faster pace, and we can see that the West-German social democrats take the management of the social democrats in Hungary very seriously, and quite a bit of action is taking place in other parties too. So by way of a summary I can say that political rationality, the preparations of the society, rather favors the elections to be held next year. Elections this year would involve a considerable amount of uncertainty and a lot of risk.

The other basic issue we have to evaluate is the economic, financial state of the country and the timing of governmental measure in order to maintain the financial balance and solvency of the country. I myself don't see exactly how much leeway we have within which these presumably restrictive measures can be varied over time, and it is not clear either what is the range of measures, if there are any such measures at all, which would belong to the so-called measures improving general conditions from the point of view of paving the way for the elections in a political sense. I know, through comrade Németh and others, that the government has already conducted several consultations in this issue, I

don't think I'm entitled to interpret it here, comrade Németh will obviously touch upon it as he sees it, how much room we have from an economic and financial point of view.

The third condition is the state of the Parliament and its ability to work. Apparently this ability is staggering now though it can be stabilized, so we do not have a situation now that the operability of the Parliament and its ability to work hang by a single hair. A basic precondition to maintain its ability to work is to slow down its erosion, and in this respect I think it is essential that we should submit the fundamental bills to its session starting in September. If we fail to do so, it will launch new waves of erosion which would seriously jeopardize its ability to work. I have already mentioned that there is a proposal in connection with the modification of the constitution that the recall of representatives should be abolished by the Parliament, which could also facilitate the stabilization of the Parliament.

And finally there is an international context, it is a fact that the Western world, the financial world is biding its time, but I believe it will be long-lasting. It was obvious that the views of the Western side did not change abruptly right after the changes in Poland, there was no breakthrough. On the other hand (*Rezső Nyers: I think it is an exaggeration, it's not worth arguing about it for long, we just imagine ourselves into it*) I also believe we just imagine ourselves into it, it does not have a radical effect on our decision, they are undoubtedly biding their time, but the basic issue is whether the assumption indicated by more and more signs is true or not. (*Rezső Nyers: ... the return on capital is in their interest.*) That's not what I have in mind now, but the fact that the American policy evidently supports an opposition or a coalition government for the future, whether this assumption is right or not? By the way, I want to add here that the evaluation and the impact of the events in Poland on domestic affairs also require some time, therefore the situation in Poland and its repercussions would also be justified a later date.

With all this anticipated, essentially we have three different options with unequal chances to succeed, which of course have numerous possible variants. The first possibility is to separate the election of the president from the parliamentary and the local governmental elections. I believe there are powerful political arguments in favor of this option, so I want to suggest that the presidential elections should be kept this year in December, and this is very easy to implement technically. Whether we can reach a political agreement on it is another matter. But it is viable because the temporal and political preparations necessary for presidential elections are much less time-consuming than those for the parliamentary elections. So if we reckon with the presidential elections in December, then there is an opportunity to hold the parliamentary elections and the local governmental elections at the same time either in June or in March or in September. Taken as a function of what is the easiest to implement with respect to the economic and financial steps to be taken by the government.

I mentioned the June date first because by that time we can guarantee the discussion of the new bill on local governments, which would then have to be done by the present Parliament. In case we decided to hold the elections in March, the two elections simultaneously, then the councils would continue to work under the old Council Law until the new one is passed. This does not mean an unresolvable conflict, by the way, for we have already discussed the principles and rules of electing the councils more or less, and then this bill, the one on electing the local governments too could be submitted to the Parliament this year.

The second option is to hold the presidential elections and the general elections simultaneously. In principle this is possible in December – I've said before that it involves great risks – or the two elections can take place in the spring, so sometime in March. I

want to add here that it would be some trouble for us to postpone the election of the president beyond the March date, for we have already nominated our presidential candidate. In this case members of the local councils would be elected separately, as a function of what time the presidential elections and the general elections are held, in June or in September.

Finally, the third option is to have all the three elections at the same time, so we would have one single election, but I would regard this option as the least desirable, in this case the elections could be held in March. Thank you very much.

**Rezső Nyers:** Are you done? Comrade Németh wishes to ...

**Miklós Németh:** I want to add to what comrade Pozsgay has said that the PEC should confirm ... I propose that the Political Executive Committee should acknowledge the information that has been given here and confirm the endeavors and further proposals which will be necessary at the conference, at the meeting next Wednesday. (*Ilona Tatai: We cannot hear him.*) I will try to speak up. So we should confirm it and give a flexible authorization for conducting the negotiations, including the submission of the party bill in these versions, if it is acceptable to the agenda of the Opposition Roundtable. It is reasonable to speed up the process anyway so that we can reach a point by holding one session sometime this week whereby the package can be submitted, based on a consensus as regards the basic directions. I can imagine that in the case of certain smaller issues we submit different versions, or we can announce a dissenting opinion.

I regard it as very important what the speech by the speaker of the bills will be like and how the government interprets each of the bills when they are submitted, but at this time it is premature to go into any detail. I just note that we have considered two things for preparing these bills, one is that the minister of justice and the minister of the interior will indicate in an accompanying letter, with an aim to give information, that with the knowledge of the government they will help members of Parliament to get prepared, since complex political and professional issues are involved, and all the bills will be sent out, even those which are not submitted to the Parliament. This might have the effect to urge the opposition, when they learn about it, when they see the intention, to complete the work to be done, and on the other hand it will help the representatives to get prepared, and third, it paves the way for a kind of double negotiation, the discussion of this package in two phases. In case the session of the Parliament can be started by discussing the bills already sent out, and when three or four days have passed, the session can be continued by a new agenda, say setting a date like October 10, or the discussion of the full package can be concluded in the second phase. So this is one thing I wanted to say.

As for the institution of the president, the Constitutional Court and the other packages, I don't think we could not agree. [...] and as for the party assets, we should start emphasizing a congressional settlement of accounts. We will settle accounts at the congress, which is equivalent to settling accounts with the people, the society.

It is very important, and this will be surveyed by the government, what bill should be discussed in what order, and what the choreography of the speeches and remarks should be like at the Parliament, their order, who will talk and what he or she will say. And we should make the contributions at the session a bit more flexible. To this effect we agreed yesterday at the Presidency that we would set up a small staff – an operative group – to help the representatives – even by giving them concrete texts – come up with ideas so that if a question comes up which requires a prompt answer, then it should not be left unanswered. So the session should not be a ritual, in which the floor is given to the next

speaker, but we should introduce the two-minute comments that well, this or that has been said, but I would like to add immediately that this should be further considered because some ideas often get lost here and it has a strong impact on the atmosphere too. So I want to propose that [...] the progress of the negotiations should be strengthened by the Executive Committee in this manner, and that the members of the negotiating delegation should be given further encouragement and authorization to conclude the talks.

Now what if the negotiations do not conclude by an agreement? The position of the cabinet is still the same, namely that we should not hesitate to submit the bills, for two reasons. To do such a thing again in this Parliament that we withdraw bills already submitted would be equivalent to breaking up the Parliament and in utter failure. [...] so the government should take this risk, considering that it will be reproved for getting orders from MSZMP, and so on and so forth. Now, in order to mitigate this effect it seems practical to submit decent variants, if necessary, to the Parliament and indicate what the government's position is. Otherwise nobody will be able to keep their own face, neither MSZMP nor the government. That's the way we saw it in the cabinet yesterday.

But we will have to wait another week ... if there's a chance to submit it with consensus based on accepting some basic directions, I don't want to repeat it, then at the beginning of next week we can have a prompt government meeting, the ministry of justice is ready, so they can get it prepared in no time, even overnight, and the whole thing can be submitted asking for urgency, referring to the two-phase negotiating time-table. It has of course become clear that the sort of bargains we have in mind, the ombudsman, the Public Audit Office, are not considered to be fundamental by them, they just roll of their back, but it does not matter, we should not really be concerned with it at the moment.

We should somehow remove the issue of the party assets from the political arena. And one proposal to this effect is the one I mentioned before, to settle accounts before the congress.

Now, in order to consider the options listed so far I spent about an hour or two at the meeting of the reform circles, the section discussing the date of the elections. Before summarizing the content of the discussion briefly, I only want to say that interestingly enough, [the meeting took place] in a very fluent and smart way. When there was no new argument presented, the chairman of the session asked the speaker to give the floor back, so the whole thing was done in a very democratic manner but there were many pros and cons confronted [...] in the presence of perhaps 80 or 100 people.

The opinions were varied. Most participants of the sections voted for having the elections next year. Then I read in the newspapers that the whole plenary [session voted] for the same. What is behind this is that it is a key issue what will happen at the congress and what the outcome will be. Even if we consider, they said, that it is a renewed party with a new program, a new organization and leading staff, we still need more to until it percolates down to the local organizations. And those who came from regional organizations, some village agricultural engineers and others, said if we decided to go in for the elections with the old gang at the regional level, then it would be of no avail to have a new program, a different kind of leadership at the top level, we are bound to lose. So this is their prognosis. There was a lot of talk on politics, international issues, economic questions touched in passing, but this is the perspective they took in considering the elections.

I don't think March is a real alternative. So as for the dates, the real alternatives are this year December and next year June. I believe that postponing the elections to September next year is a very bad idea, I propose that we should not put it forward at all. I can state [it] with responsibility that if we agree to something like it, and foreign investors

learn that we want to mess around with it until September, then we as a government will get into a very unfavorable position. I think it is a very irresponsible and inconsiderate proposal.

So there are two dates, December and June, or the summer, May-June. Though risking a lot, we can start the new year even without any agreement, but in this case we must already have a few Western and Far-Eastern loans in our pocket which are targeted and elaborately discussed. If these are well-prepared and already in our pocket. If not, then our reserves might get down to a level of six or seven hundred [million dollars] by next February or March. That would be disastrous, so it would not give us any leeway, at any moment, at any stronger puff of air in international politics, any jerk ... so – or what have you – two more Jews are beaten up in Poland and it's finished, that is, what I have in mind is the row the other day.

We are working on it so that if there is no agreement with the Monetary Fund, we can still finance the budget, but I want to say that even in case we do have an agreement, some tough, very tough measures are simply inescapable whose toughness cannot be lessened by the government.

Now, whether it is exaggerated or not, it's sure that there's some exaggeration in it ... that's not really the aspect from which I view this thing that [the Monetary Fund] will wait for a coalition or an opposition government ... It's unimportant, [for] whoever will be in power, this bag will have to be picked up and carried through. [...] Except for Japan and FRG no country is in the position, including the USA, to start giving out governmental loans, well, there is none. The budget of the United States is empty, relatively speaking, and the banks, well, they don't give money for charity, based on a like-it – don't-like-it policy, even if they are influenced by their governments.

So my opinion can still change, and the points listed by comrade Fejti with respect to choosing the date are all important, and I propose similar ones for consideration, but if possible, let's exclude the September 8 date. And we should not submit it at all, showing that this is also something we have in mind, and concerning the options listed before the president should, I think, be elected in a referendum at the end of this year, and then hold the parliamentary elections and the local governmental elections simultaneously, so based on what I know today I would like to support this option, well it seems now that it will be next year.

[...]

**Miklós Németh:** Excuse me, comrade Boros. I have not explained the March date clearly, just one sentence. The previous consensus, getting the money ... then we will have to introduce the tough measures even if half of the country goes on strike. Then we have to put aside 10-15 billion from this money that we have saved, but the people won't forget about it by March. By May, or April, we will have to get ready to face some claims, demanding that we should take some steps, and then we can use this money to give something before the elections. But to add money to it at the beginning of January and then have the elections in March, well, I don't endorse it.

[...]

**Pál Vastagh:** Very briefly. I want to start with a proposal that it would be a good idea to collect everything concerning the party assets that has so far been turned over to the society this year for public use, either legally or just for use. I believe a sizable sum could

be generated this way that has so far been offered in the counties for various purposes.

As for the date of the elections, actually, the ... in my view we can only consider that psychologically favorable moment which is the most preferable to us. Considering the present state of the party, the present situation in this respect there are encouraging signs, but unfortunately the political map of the country is rather heterogeneous for drawing far-reaching conclusions from the occasional good signs. The way I see it now is ... the members of the party become quite active in the course of electing the deputies to the congress. If the result of this will be a congress with a positive outcome, if it result in content, or at least a better political atmosphere, then it is a mistake not to make use of its downwind, its backwash. If one thinks of the fact that if the elections had been held in May, July or August of 1988, I believe MSZMP would have had pretty good chances making use of the downwind of the favorable atmosphere we had at that time.

From this aspect I don't think the changes within the party are too rapid so that they can make a qualitative difference within half a year. I don't see any guarantee that these radical changes should take place within half a year or eight months in everyday work, either in the structure of the apparatus, its competence, its ability to change or even in the political orientation of the major masses of the party. So I believe that – no matter how strongly we rely on the successful outcome of the congress – we should try to have the elections in December for I'm afraid that a state of lasting political tension, overstrained with stress will break down the leading bodies of the party even more.

The third thing: we should stick with the election of the president by all means, even if we consider that it is not viable now for December, because it could ensure some stability from the point of view of governing the country. I think it is important not to start negotiating those fundamental laws which are not feasible now without the new constitution. What I have in mind here is that e.g. we should not start working on the new local government bill without having the new constitution, but at best the bill on electing the local governments because for this we would need a consti... So I'm afraid the basic laws will be driven out of the whole constitutional process, and a new Parliament will perhaps enact a constitution that is different in its details, and then the basic laws will have to be adjusted to it. So it would be better to come to an agreement concerning the fundamental things, that is, a new parliament and a new constitution, and the basic laws having an overall impact on the society would be built on this framework.

[...]

**Jenő Kovács:** Dear Comrades! I also propose to support the work done by the delegation headed by comrade Pozsgay and agree to the positions and decisions which have been made so far, even if the agreement made yesterday will not be exempt from stirring up debates within certain circles of the party, well, we have to admit this, it will happen day after day, we will have a lot of it, so let's endorse this view.

The other thing is that this delicate issue – the relationship between the Parliament, the government and the Roundtable – has to be discussed. It has to be clarified, for the issue is settled in principle though, but the Parliament has its sovereignty and the Roundtable cannot oblige it to anything, and the government is also an independent body, and it does not have to report to either the Roundtable or to MSZMP. But it is not easy to find the extent which allow for views differing from the agreements made at the negotiations between the government, the Parliament and the Roundtable, because it might easily be qualified as breach, betrayal, or what have you.

The proposal that the Parliament should discuss alternative versions of the party



bill is quite feasible in my view, just like the possibility of discussing various alternatives of other issues, such as the one concerning the power of the new presidential institution, or that the Parliament should maintain its right to make a sovereign decision on calling the elections, be it the election of the president or the parliamentary elections. So if we accept the principle that the results of the Roundtable talks are not binding, then we still have to be very careful not to get into a situation in which the results of the talks end up disadvantageous for MSZMP, and exclusively for MSZMP. I believe in this case other issues will also have to be considered so that they should be submitted in alternative versions by the Roundtable, and in this sense there is some fight going on for winning the support of the members of the Parliament, so there is some room for backstage deals until the last moment of passing the bills.

I definitely endorse having the elections in June, of course if it does not lead to economic deterioration, for in that case there is obviously no point in arguing about months. I want to add one more to the points mentioned so far. The thing is not simply that we need time in order to win credibility for the new party so that it can become stronger through its new leaders, program and actions, but also that one weak point of our ability to form a coalition, which is one of our endeavors, is that the relationship between the bases and the local leaders is extremely adversary in most cases. So the ones we might rely on for a coalition, and perhaps the national leaderships also see a possibility for it, be it whatever organization, are, with a few exceptions, locally rather ... the issue of forming a coalition is an issue between prospective partners whose relationship involves a lot of animosity, often hatred. And obviously we also have a role to play in this, that's why those changes are so much needed, if we want a coalition so that the leaders of those organizations which might be willing to form a coalition with us should not be overthrown by their voters, as it happened e.g. in Poland. That is also one lesson of what has taken place in that country, because the candidates who eventually were elected representatives were not those who showed restraint, moderateness, wisdom, and any sign of willingness to form a coalition with PZPR.

And finally, concerning the recall of representatives, I endorse the proposal put forward earlier, I also believe it is necessary to take up a definite position on this issue, I would include it, by the way, in the range of issues in which the government should have freedom of action, if we allow for quite a lot of freedom of action for the Parliament in other matters. Thank you.

[...]

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes. No other comments? Well, dear comrades, I propose that we should acknowledge the report given by comrade Pozsgay and that we should agree to give a short account of the result of the talks achieved so far at the next meeting of the Central Committee, [in which] we emphasize the options concerning the elections. What I propose is that we should maintain the option of having the elections in December, and put in the June date as an alternative. By the way, we should not be very rigid and reject the March date for we cannot know what the future will bring, we simply should not plan on this date but only on December and June.

I propose the following: let us accept that the delegation should endorse a separate referendum in the case of the coat-of-arms, let us also accept that the institution of the president and the Constitutional Court should be included in the proposed modification of the constitution, as it has been spelled out here. Let us accept that the president of the republic is elected just this once in a referendum for the sake of a democratic transition, so

it does not mean that we want to switch to a system of electing the president directly. Let us accept that it is desirable to maintain and extend the role of the Third Party, to have the trade unions participate in the Third Party, and that both sides, MSZMP as well as the Opposition Roundtable, should pay ample attention to the views of the Third Party. That's the position we should strengthen and that's what we should say publicly too, it would be very important to do so before Wednesday so that the Council of Trade Unions can also formulate their position. If a definite statement like this is issued by MSZMP, then the leaders of the trade unions can present it at their meeting. Well, (*Miklós Németh: This can only be done now by the spokesman.*) (*Interruption: in the spokesman's statement today.*) or the negotiating delegation should make the statement here. It is not enough that MSZMP, the negotiating delegation too, but the (*László Major: This can only be done in a separate statement because gradually we have stopped issuing statements by the Politburo.*) (*Miklós Németh: The negotiating delegations should make the statement.*) the delegation should issue a statement to the Hungarian News Agency in which it is properly worded.

Well, I say, let's accept the position concerning the members of the armed forces as far as their party membership is concerned. We supported, did we not, the position that they should not fulfill any national function, though I have to say there is one thing here that must be made more precise, namely that if they are in an unassigned status, then they of course can fulfill any function. (*Imre Pozsgay: That's clear, so only if they are in full service.*) Right, well I hope it's going to be clear and straightforward, but for fear that, just because we have not found ministers of defense, or what have you.

Now then, let us agree that the government will get prepared to submit the bills, the fundamental laws at the September 25 meeting, so let us accept now that comrade Németh will have these bills distributed in advance and let's get ready for a two-phase discussion of the bills in the Parliament. Let us also agree that the heads of the parliamentary committees will participate as observers.

Now then, as for the alternatives of the fundamental laws to be submitted, let us accept the proposal that the government will submit several, or two version in the case of certain issues, but I would like to emphasize, and I want to have consensus in this, that the government should act as the government of MSZMP, so in the case of primary, fundamental laws it should endorse the position of MSZMP, but since we are a fair negotiating partner, and we want to be like that all through the process, the Opposition Roundtable should also submit its own version. But the government should not change in its attitude and transform into a simple administrative government, for I believe it would be most unfortunate and would not be accepted anyway, so it should act as the government of MSZMP.

I say, as for the date of elections we agreed that we would endorse the beginning of December or June. With respect to the issue of recalling the members of Parliament we should have a definite, resolute position, and we should do everything we can so that this anti-democratic institution should not be enforced, and if possible, it should be removed from the bills on the occasion of modifying the constitution. The best would be if we could arrest their word and get the Opposition Roundtable to do now in the present constitution what they propose for the new constitution in relation to their negotiating partner.

**Imre Pozsgay:** Can I cut in at this point, comrade Nyers. We perhaps should, among ourselves, accept this with the provision that if the CC decides that the elections will be held at the beginning of December, then there is not much point in changing the institution of recalling the representatives, it would merely [result in] unnecessary political dispute.

**Rezső Nyers:** Well, then they won't be able to recall anybody anyway.

**Imre Pozsgay:** Right, and we can play with the time in a way that it won't be possible, practically.

**Rezső Nyers:** Right, but it seems pretty much like holding the elections in December will presumably be impossible technically.

**Imre Pozsgay:** Then this resolution should come into action.

**Rezső Nyers:** We have to wait and see what happens at the party conference. At the moment I don't think the party leadership is unified enough so that the congress can establish a, how shall I put it, an intact, unified MSZMP. I stress I don't think it is insured, but I do think it's still possible, for the time being we are on diverging routes again, and we have not yet become unified yet, we are not unified in issues like the party organizations at the workplace, not everybody would endorse it. Everybody endorses the institution of the president, but from the outside not everybody supports it, and the endorsement of the presidential institution will falter if our position staggers in the case of the party organizations at the workplace, because if we are divided on one issue, we are likely to be divided in the other too, and then I wonder what will happen. So, frankly speaking, I endorse the view that if our congress ends up being successful, we should have the elections in December, that's what I support, but we can not swear on it at the present moment.

Now then, it is desirable to pull out the issue of the party assets from the ... the politically delicate questions and remove it from the negotiations too, as far as it is possible. It is the congress that has to settle accounts, we have to show ... let us accept comrade Vastagh's proposal, now at the next CC meeting first we have to show to the CC what we have already turned over nationwide to organizations for various purposes, and also what we are planning to do now, and then we should inform the public all about it. We have to draw a picture of a fair and correct MSZMP to our members, for our members also faltered on this issue before the people.

With respect to the law on local governments, well, there was an initiation made, the petition of the members of Parliament cannot be blocked now. These views will be stated, actually they are appealing and fair endeavors, initiations by the people or by political organizations, but we should not urge the bill on local governments, it can only be considered if the elections take place in June. With respect to an impartial supervisory committee we should accept the position that it should not question the function of the government to supervise the mass media, it cannot be questioned, for then everything will become disorganized, there is no nation without a government, there is no nation like that, it has never been invented in the world yet. Well, of course, we are in a revolutionary state. But if there is a revolution now, then it's a different case, then it requires revolutionary action on the part of both sides, however there is no revolution.

Now then, have I left out anything, I think I haven't, from the disputed issues, so I propose we should take up this position, and that's what the negotiating delegation should represent. I only want to add, confirming our earlier position on which we all agreed, that without a firm MSZMP there is no stable government, and without a stable government there is no stable Parliament, and without the stability of these three there is no peaceful transition to democracy. This is what we must have in mind and endorse boldly, and if

anyone challenges any of these three things, they are so much interrelated, if any one of them is destroyed, that will be the end of our peaceful transition. I could also add the intactness of the army, but this is not a political, a direct political issue, we agreed on it the other day. The Worker's Militia is only a very small part of this issue, but we won't even allow the disbandment of the People's Militia in a demonstrative fashion because it is also related to the issue whether the system is being reformed or whether it is falling apart. Well, comrades, then I propose to close this item of the agenda.

**Miklós Németh:** Comrade Nyers, may I say just one sentence. (*Nyers: Yes, please.*) All in all, I agree with and endorse the position you have summarized. I would like to [say] two things concerning the fact that the government will submit alternatives in a fair way, but I would like to clarify the possibility [that] in certain cases the government does have the right to propose something that differs from the views of the opposition, and evaluating the position of the CC of MSZMP it can suggest an intermediary [position].

Well, comrade Nyers was sitting there, I can not give orders so that everybody should stand in attention. [...] the agreement made by comrade Fejti was not consulted with the government at that time. So I could go on listing the mistakes committed, and these people still have self-esteem and credit. So, I don't want to speak against it, I understood comrade Nyers, the intention is clear: first place is given to the position of MSZMP, then comes the position of the opposition, but there will be alternatives, I don't really mean now the things at the workplace in which there will be an intermediary position taken up by the government, let's not exclude it, which of course can be voted down, thrown out by the Parliament.

**Rezső Nyers:** Well, I think we won't be able to set these issues at rest yet. I believe that as far as the cardinal issues are concerned the government of MSZMP should submit the position of MSZMP.

**Miklós Mémeth:** Then it will resign, comrade Nyers, if it does not agree with it, then it will take its hat and say, I cannot with good conscience, that I return my mandate because I have come up against the party because this is, this is a second possibility.

**Rezső Nyers:** That's right, this is also a possibility. So then, in cardinal issues the government should act as the government of MSZMP ... by submitting the proposal, it's another question that the party should view its government in a role in which it proposes deals in the course of the negotiations, it seeks a compromise, now that we have a situation like this, we have to give such freedom to the government to seek a possible solution when it tries to reconcile views. But if it submits something different in the first place and announces itself to be independent in cardinal political issues, then it transforms into an administrative government. Now I, it has been accepted by comrade Németh that the government can not take up a position of an administrative government because it will then give rise to a completely different situation. Then we will most likely have to stop the roundtable negotiations in their present form, for MSZMP immediately gets into a partly opposition position and act as an opposition organization, now this would be a very dangerous situation, for I don't think I have to say that ... well I suggest comrade Németh should reconsider this thing in this sense.

[...] it is not possible to keep our party members uncertain as to what we have in mind, what we might and should think of when talking about reform policy, about democratic socialism, the renewal of the party, our relationship to other parties and Eastern

Europe, and our relationship to the Transylvanian issue for instance. Well, it has been said here as a responsible view that Transylvania should be made independent, well now, I have to say that these are symptoms of the lack of clarity, and we should not dramatize anything. That's what I endorse.

**Miklós Németh:** I have looked it up, because I was also interested in this issue, I have talked to someone who was present there. Reportedly, it was not said like this by comrade Szűrös, what he said was that the cultural, linguistic and educational autonomy of Transylvania is ... so it was not the autonomy of Transylvania but that the communities should be given rights ... the Hungarians and the other nations should be granted a position ... This is what came down in the papers as the autonomy of Transylvania, but these are two different things.

**Rezső Nyers:** Well, I say, I don't question it that comrade Szűrös made it clear, but unfortunately I myself saw it on television by chance, and he said, he said it in a way, he did not mean it that way, I have confidence in comrade Szűrös, full confidence, but such slips of the tongue, one after the other ... But it was not only comrade Szűrös. All of us have done such things, there are also problems with comrade Grósz's speech delivered in Salgótarján. That's the way things are, that's how we stand now, and we have to put all these things onto the table, because we must believe that if we don't come out with these things, we start protecting each other, and start shooting at each other from a defensive position, rather than objectively looking at how we think about these issues and putting aside our prestige in the debate, then we will not be able to muddle through these problems. Well, that's how I see these things, how I interpret it, but nobody should take it as an attack on comrade Szűrös or on comrade Grósz, and I will have more to say on it when returning to the meeting of CC, but it would be better if we could speed up our talk because there are serious, important political issues that we should still discuss.

[...]

[Miscellaneous:] **The meeting of the Ferenc Münnich Society**

**Sándorné Rajki:** If I can get three minutes, I will inform you very briefly about the meeting of the Ferenc Münnich Society held on Saturday, which I attended. Just briefly. The introductory lecture and the program declaration which basically can be taken as the platform of the MSZMP members of the society for the congress were all about the political situation and can be regarded as self-identification. This self-definition could be reflected by saying that they dissociated themselves from the Marxist-Leninist party of workers and from any armed threat whatever direction it may come from, but they also rejected the endeavors of the leadership of MSZMP which envisage a socialism without the communists and pave the way for a bourgeois restoration.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes? That's what it contained?

**Sándorné Rajki:** Yes. So it was said openly.

**Rezső Nyers:** Said openly. For I was shown a document, but it did not contain anything like that.

**Sándorné Rajki:** That was ... the starting point for the negotiations was different, this was a kind of introductory lecture, and this thing recurred several times in the opinion of the participants. At the same time this self-definition was also about the fact that they continue to consider themselves to be a critical ally of MSZMP, though the way they saw this endeavor was that it had met with little success and that it seemed it would not bring any results in the future. Additionally, they very explicitly stated that they identified with Ribánszky's platform, so they declared this very firmly, that's what they wanted to endorse.

Now then, they gave a very superficial and one-sided picture of the political situation in the country, both the lecture and the comments involved the following important topics: with respect to October 23, the October events in general almost all the speakers made it clear that they did not agree with a one-word label, but if that is to be used, it was a counter-revolution. Now, the way it was put was that all the participating deputies declared it accompanied by standing ovation.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes.

**Sándorné Rajki:** The other thing was that several people were concerned with the possible outcome of the congress, and since they had their own deputies, they decided to represent their own platform at the congress. Several people stated that if this program and these party rules were accepted, then this party would cease to exist for them. Well, the way Ribánszky put it was that naturally they would regard this party as a communist party whatever transpired, and they would not leave it, the ones who should resign the party are those who want to have a socialist party, or whatever sort of a party.

They qualified the present political processes in the country as counter-revolutionary, saying that there was a quiet counter-revolution in progress in which the leadership and the reform circles of MSZMP took a leading role, so to say. The ... I think it is important to note that both the comments made by the deputies and the speeches by the leaders assured the National Council of Trade Unions of their solidarity in the conflict they had with MSZMP and the government. Several people raised the issue of the refugees, explicitly from a perspective which maintains that the reason for the problem is that the sealing of the Western border of the country had been removed. So it was virtually brought about by us by doing so. As for the main political and economic problems in the country they regard the foreign debt accumulated over the last 15 years as the major reason for them, and though they reject the Stalinist system, they still maintain that this was the main reason.

As for the atmosphere I want to say that, well, it profoundly belied the tone of the program draft and at times it appeared to be fearful. The majority of the people present were elderly, but 16-16% of the deputies were not members of the party. And there were quite a lot of young people there too. Very briefly one word concerning the congress, they are getting ready for it, naturally, and several of them stated it in a somewhat threatening fashion.

Now, what was not touched upon at all was that they tendentiously did not mention the period between 1956 and 1962. Nobody said anything as to whether Imre Nagy and his associates had fallen victim to a show trial, so it was not even mentioned, and nobody spoke about the ... well, why young people today reject the world they represent. They spoke very superficially and unfairly about how and why we had got into this situation. As for the role of the model, as I've mentioned before, they only said that they rejected it too, but whether there was a need for changing the model or not was not mentioned at all. No

word was spared on establishing a constitutional state, neither on individual and collective rights of freedom. They did speak, however, about that fact that since the opposition did not have a large membership, they could easily be eliminated, but the incompetent leadership of MSZMP was unable to, well that's how threatening tones recurred. Nobody mentioned the ethnic minority issue. No one talked about the ethnic minority policy of the socialist countries. They evaluated the present situation in socialist countries in one sentence, saying that signs of balking could be observed. No then, some of the speakers were historians and members of the Academy who corroborated these phenomena from a theoretical aspect, which was received with utmost pleasure.

**Rezső Nyers:** What sort of historians?

**Sándorné Rajki:** I will tell you right away, because the ... one of them was András Széchy, am I right, that's his name, he is a historian, yes, (*Several people shout in: András Széchy.*) I tell you the other name too, it was József Szigeti.

**Rezső Nyers:** Oh, we've known him for long.

**Sándorné Rajki:** Well, it was they who provided theoretical grounds in this sense, they talked quite a lot about the leadership of MSZMP, saying that yes, the foreign debt of the last 15 years and the things we have done since May 1988, and the utter incompetence of the leadership of MSZMP in all this, even saying that, well, I'm not saying it because ... but he says the theoretical, the theoretical knowledge and training of the leaders of MSZMP come to nil, for instance Szigeti was one who said it and ...

**Rezső Nyers:** And his comes to double nil.

**Sándorné Rajki:** Well then, the only thing I want to add is that my intention to attend the meeting, knowing this mentality and world, was definitely not to say anything, if possible, but I couldn't help it and in the afternoon I simply had to put two questions to comrade Puja who, concerning the refugee issue ... it was he who put it in a way that the reason was the removal of the sealing of the border, and he very powerfully criticized us for expecting support from the West and for day-dreaming that it would not incur serious political conditions, and the we would have to become capitalists. By the way, let me just give you two examples for this simplistic way of thinking, one of the speakers said "why did you not have the membership of the party vote on whether they wanted a multiparty system or not", and "why don't you have them vote on whether they want socialism or capitalism", and in such cases the crowd always made it clear what they wanted by ovation.

**Rezső Nyers:** This party is ... the country. It's this absurd view behind it.

**Sándorné Rajki:** Well, they reacted in a quite unfriendly way even when seeing I wanted to ask a question, but when I did ask it, it caused a bit of a scandal, a small part of the deputies headed by a lady stood up screaming that it was a provocation and that they would send whatever kind of a deputy to the leadership and demand that the comrade should elaborate on her position in this matter. But then the air was slowly cleared, so there were no further problems. Comrade Puja elegantly evaded the question. Then I thought I was also entitled not to say what my opinion was.

By the way, what I asked was, thinking that I could perhaps put them out of their overly self-confident position, thinking that this was the only problem that could be remedied easily, how he viewed the fact that tens or hundreds of thousands of people were leaving most of the socialist countries, becoming outlaws, regardless of whether there was a fence or not. This was one question. The other one asked him, since he had a lot of experience, whether our economic relations with the socialist countries, including of course the Soviet Union, had so far been subject to any political conditions. So this was the question they did not like at all.

And since I simply had to speak afterwards and I had to evade these questions, I then spoke about the reform circles because they very sharply raged against them, trying to prove that it was not a right-wing movement within the party but rather a new platform for renewing the left-wing ideas, that it was not paving the way for bourgeois restoration or some sort of a capitalism but rather a new socialism, well they received it with quite a bit of skepticism. I also said that the society should perhaps consider that young generations were carrying out negotiations at Villányi street basically about the same questions and that perhaps we should both show more interest in each other's mentality and ideas. We parted company in a good mood.

I also want to add that since I took pains to make my remarks personal, I don't believe any conflict had arisen which should be dealt with now. I don't think it is absolutely necessary to represent the leadership of the party at meetings like this on any level. The letter sent by comrade Grósz, which was received quite well, though not in ecstasy, would be sufficient, I believe. For they expect the person attending the meeting, they challenge him to say something, and taking up the glove in any way without having to give up some of his views while a little bit seized by fear simply does not make much sense. However, I think it is important to remain in contact at least with those circles of the society which still show some willingness to cooperate, and I could see that some of them were indeed willing to do so.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, yes, there are some.

**Sándorné Rajki:** Perhaps it could integrate them if we conducted theoretical discussions which could promote this kind of views by endorsing some of their ideas which are not ideological but of a different character. Well, it's kind of embarrassing in a place like that ... you cannot argue or stand up and say it is they who MSZMP cannot go on with, well, it's just inconceivable.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes. Thank you. I believe we will have to analyze the Ferenc Münnich Society as well. At the moment I think it would be a mistake if we considered the whole society as being outside of the political movement of our party, though there are some who explicitly say that we are making way for the bourgeoisie, well this is already [...] But at the same time they indicated that they wanted to see me, we talked, they gave me some documents, it was Berényi and two other people, I don't know them. With these people we can, they are quite critical, and God only knows, they [...] It's a difficult question, but for the time being let's not excommunicate them as a society, I believe it would be a mistake, especially because they are not the worst of all.



Document 73.  
Meeting of the SED Politburo  
[A Critique of Hungary].  
*September 5, 1989.*



**Transcript of the SED Politburo Session**  
September 5, 1989<sup>1</sup>

[**Oskar**] **Fischer.** The letter from Comrade Shevardnadze was forwarded by Comrade Gorinovich. He emphasized the concern of the Soviet Union for the further escalation of the campaign against the GDR. Kvitsinsky will speak with Genscher's representative to cool or sober feelings in the FRG. Fischer told Gorinovich that the article in "Pravda" was indeed good, but the Soviet side has far more possibilities.<sup>2</sup> O. Fischer's proposal for convening the Committee of Foreign Ministers of the Warsaw Pact states met with misgivings from Gorinovich. That did not materialize too quickly. One must take into consideration the deviating viewpoints in Poland and Hungary as well. Fischer stuck to the proposal, but Shevardnadze's representative Aboymov had reservations too. It seems clear that Hungary will be yielding to the pressure from the FRG. Nemeth, Pozgay, and Horn are not playing with their cards openly. The Minister of the Interior Horvath views the situation better. A change in the Hungarian position, beginning with the emigration of GDR citizens from September 11, should not be expected.

[**Willi**] **Stoph.** The West wants to continually raise the stakes. Hungary supports this in actuality, particularly with the open borders. That goes against all treaties. The FRG's campaign also goes against the agreements between Erich Honecker and Kohl. We must present our situation more aggressively to our allies and other countries. . . .

[**Kurt**] **Hager.** Hungary is playing a double game. Their meeting in Bonn is further kept in secret.<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian gate remains open. It is therefore necessary that the Warsaw Pact states present our point of view to Hungary. In the long run such a negative position by Hungary does not bode well for friendly discussions between the two of us. What they are doing is a breach in hitherto normal relations. We are faced with the question how we should continue to conduct ourselves with Hungary. That is for me still an open question. But the Hungarian position worsens with respect to us — in favor of Bonn. They will obey the orders of Bonn...

[**Werner**] **Krolitowski.** I am in agreement with the letter by Erich Honecker,<sup>4</sup> the newscast declaration, and the other materials. We must continue unwaveringly:

1. The strengthening of the GDR.
2. The strengthening of the alliance system, particularly with the Soviet Union.
3. The exposing of the FRG campaign.

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<sup>1</sup> Standing in for Egon Krenz at the session again was Wolfgang Herger, who took down the minutes.

<sup>2</sup> Under the headline "Hour of the Hypocrites," "Pravda" ran an article by M. Podklyuchnikov. The West German media was made responsible above all for the situation in Hungary. See *Neues Deutschland* 1. September 1989.

<sup>3</sup> In a surprise visit, Hungarian Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth and Foreign Minister Gyula Horn came to Bonn for discussions with Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. There it was agreed to open the Hungarian border to the West to those GDR citizens willing to emigrate. See Gyula Horn: *Freiheit, die ich meine. Erinnerungen des ungarischen Au3euministers, der den Eisernen Vorhang Delete.* Hamburg 1991, 314 pgs.

<sup>4</sup> On 5 September *Neues Deutschland* first published an article by Erich Honecker titled "40 Years of the German Democratic Republic," which was originally written for the theoretical journal of the Central Committee of the SED, "Unity." See *Einheit*, 1989 Volume 9/10, p. 788

One must fundamentally assess the entire campaign of the enemy and present it to the Politburo. We should use Shevardnadze's letter as an opportunity to make the first proposals. We must also continue to work with Hungary, so that what is planned does not occur...

**[Erich] Mialle.** Hungary is betraying socialism. The proposal by Fischer for a meeting of the foreign ministers is very important. It concerns the power relationships in socialism in general. If Hungary continues to proceed with this, we are risking Hungary becoming a transit country. We must however support our comrades in Hungary too. We provide our comrades with theoretical articles, which are read and studied. What matters though is to clarify on the practical questions in the spirit of these good, theoretical articles...

Document 74.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts). *September 6, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

September 6, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** We are also pleased to record that the preparation of the electoral law has reached a stage of public consensus. I think we have created suitable political circumstances for the government to present its draft bill to Parliament. In the outstanding issue in dispute we accept the proposal of the Opposition Roundtable that experts should examine again the issue of social organisations' right to appoint candidates, considering the interpretation of József Antall as well.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I would like to react to two points. The speaker of the Third Side mentioned a possible solution in case there is no consensus. I think we do not have to dispute it here, it will have to be discussed in a committee commissioned to clarify this issue. The other thing is the regulation of organisations of the character of parties. In all relevant sub-committees and here as well, the Opposition Roundtable has always insisted that parties should not be separate legal categories, regulated separately in all aspects, but they should be defined as associations, organisations that appoint candidates for the elections. That means that József Antall's proposal has been accepted by us from the beginning, namely, that any civil organisation that fulfils the criteria of the party law – that is, it makes its assets available for review; it does not operate at workplaces, which criterium I have to stress as a fundamental one for the Opposition Roundtable, and which means an unsurmountable problem in relation to trade unions; and it has a membership consisting of natural persons – any such organisation can appoint candidates for the elections.

The Opposition Roundtable has always held this view concerning the party law and we would like to highlight the same criterium now. That is why we have suggested that parties should not be defined as a separate type of organisation, but they should be registered on the basis of the law of associations. That is to say, this is a proposal from our side that has been valid all through the negotiations, and considering it would mean a solution for several organisations on the Third Side in the sense that they might be able to appoint candidates for the elections, however, some organisations would hardly be able to fulfil these criteria.

[...]

**György Szabad:** Let me add one additional comment to what has been said so far. I would only like to remind the Honoured Representatives of the Third Side that movements and organisations can by all means support individual candidates.

[...]

**Imre Nagy:** We are familiar with the legal possibilities concerning individual candidates; we have primarily raised the issue of lists. Since it seems that all sides agree in what would be the best thing to do next, I suggest that we proceed.

[...]

**István Huszár:** [...] as a representative of the People's Front I can accept that the right of civil organisations to appoint candidates should be included in the draft bill as an alternative and Parliament should decide on its final adoption. However, if we consider the electoral law to refer to civil organisations as well, provided that they can fulfil the criteria defined in the law, including all details, I can accept not to include two alternatives in the draft bill.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** [...] Before proceeding to discuss the issue of party organisations at workplaces, I would like to make a single comment. Certain newspapers concluded from the negotiations held two days ago that the position of the Opposition Roundtable 'hardened' after the meeting of the Central Committee of the MSZMP. I would like to say that the position of the Opposition Roundtable has not hardened, in the following issue that this statement may have referred to, the Opposition Roundtable has always held the same position. ...there will probably be a discussion in the issue of the operation of parties today as well, that is why we would like to avoid the impression that we are presenting some "hardened" version of our position. [...]

In general, the position of the Opposition Roundtable is that the next parliamentary elections can be carried out in order and in a way that approaches equal opportunity to the greatest extent possible if at the time of the elections no party organisations operate at the decisive majority of workplaces – we can accept armed bodies to be an exception to this rule. All that considered, the Opposition Roundtable welcomes the agreement reached on the three-party talks, which states that simultaneously with the law on the administration and operation of parties entering into force, judges will no longer be party members, no party organisation can operate at courts, party organisations at workplaces can not participate in decisions as we agreed last time, they can not be incorporated into the structure of the workplaces in any way, can not expect to be financed or supported by the workplaces, that is, they have to operate from their own party's resources.

The Opposition Roundtable agrees with, or rather, can accept the original proposal of the MSZMP of a week ago that by the end of 1989, party organisations should stop operating in the state administration. In this issue we agreed last time as well. There is no agreement, however, in the issue that was presented in the spirit of gradualness. The Opposition Roundtable agrees with the original proposal of the MSZMP, better to say, it can accept that by the middle of 1990, party units should be wound up at other workplaces – other than state administration and armed bodies. We can accept that theoretically, however, we would like to add that the Opposition Roundtable considers it necessary to eliminate party units 90 days before the elections, that is to say, at the beginning of the campaign, for the reasons outlined above; their existence would be rather disadvantageous at the time of the elections. Last time we did not agree in that; according to the Central Committee of the MSZMP, last time MSZMP held the position that party units should not be eliminated at these workplaces. We hold



on to our position. In this respect our position is the following: in the spirit of gradualness the Opposition Roundtable takes notice of the original proposal of the MSZMP to eliminate party units in the armed forces by the end of 1990.

The Opposition Roundtable expressed its opinion that if the MSZMP does not modify its position of two days ago – that is to say, it would not eliminate party organisations at workplaces other than state administration and armed forces –, the Opposition Roundtable does not consider the above to be a consensus, but it wishes to maintain its separate opinion.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** [...] All I can say on behalf of the delegation of the MSZMP is that our negotiating partners are familiar with the latest resolution of the Central Committee of the MSZMP; the delegation has not received new authorisation since then.

On behalf of the government I can say that the government will present the draft bill to Parliament according to the position of the MSZMP, indicating the separate or different opinions of the negotiating partners.

[...]

**Nagy Imre:** [...] it seems to me that we are disputing about the issue that the party units created by those working at the same workplace – which they undoubtedly have a right to do – can assemble in the cultural centre of the factory if it is outside the factory, but they can not assemble there if the cultural centre is inside. If that is really the question, I do not think it is worth getting stuck by it.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition Roundtable would like to speak.

**Iván Pető:** I would not like this to appear a bigger problem than it actually is, however, I also would not like to belittle it in this way. According to the position of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, it wishes to accept as a standard practice that parties can organise themselves at workplaces other than administrative units and armed forces. And that is not a question of the location of cultural centres, it is a more general problem than that. Our position is that parties should not operate at the workplaces in any form.

[...]

**József Antall:** The Opposition Roundtable has always held the position that parties can organize themselves on the basis of workplaces, but they can not operate at the workplace, only within the party organisation of the respective area. The workplace can not become the battlefield of the fight between parties. [...] Another thing: I would like to summarise for ourselves the answer of Mr. Imre Pozsgay, Minister of State, to the question raised last time. If we understood his answer correctly, the government's position can be summarised by saying that the government would present to the Parliament the position of any of the sides, even that of the Opposition Roundtable – due to acknowledging the equality of the sides – as an equal but separate opinion. Is this a correct interpretation, that is to say, would it be indicated that the opinion of the organizations and parties of the Opposition Roundtable is this and that? [...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** My answer is „Yes” to József Antall’s question; this is how the government would present the separate opinion, in the way the Opposition Roundtable formulated it.

[...]

**György Fejti:** I would like to make a supplementary comment to a detail, considering that at a certain point there is mention of limiting the right of assembly. Moreover, the interpretation of the representatives of the Opposition Roundtable makes it a matter of principle. I would like to shatter this belief in the participants, because I think this prohibition has as much of an underlying principle as the prohibition of assembly in residential areas would have. These are equal concepts from a legal aspect, which makes it a practical question for me, and it [the position of the ORT] is a discriminative approach to an existing and changing practice. [...] I think it is a fact that the MSZMP intends to change its role at the workplaces. And it is also a fact that it switches the focus of its work through an evolutionary process, keeping track of the changes in society. In this context it is not quite justified to put a party into an absurdly difficult situation with a simple legal act, while referring to the equality of rights and opportunities.

[...]

**Károly Vigh:** Let me answer György Fejti’s statement. I do not consider this issue to be primarily an issue of legal theory, I think it is rather a straightforward political question. (...) Here and now, in Hungary after what had happened in the past decades – I do not think I should enter into details –, when the MSZMP created a monopolistic situation at the workplaces, while the new formations – historic parties and novel organizations – do not have equal chances and they apparently will not have them in the next few months either... It should be kept in mind that we want to eliminate a monopoly in the spirit of democracy and reconciliation and considering our economic situation – and I think that is a political question...

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** [...] György Fejti is completely right in saying that it is not usual to prohibit the operation of party units at workplaces; it is not usual, because usually there are no such party units operating.

In Eastern Europe there existed a state socialism, a hierarchy, an etatism pervading the system all through to the production line, and the system was organized around the hierarchical mechanism of the MSZMP reaching down to the production line. That is what has to be eliminated. It can be eliminated in two ways. One way is to let the other parties invade workplaces as well, transforming workplaces into a battleground of the disputes between parties. The other way, which seems simpler, is to end this practice with a simple act of legislation; this seems to be the simplest and fastest solution, eliminating these units within a reasonably short period. That is why the Opposition Roundtable made this proposal, taking into account the points of view of peaceful transition.

[...]

**Mátyás Budzsákia:** [...] If, apart from workplaces of public power, parties can establish their units [at workplaces] with the restriction that they can not carry out political activities during working hours, they can not pervade the organizational and management system of the workplace and can not make a decision affecting the professional activity of the workplace. The restriction in this case covers three conditions which ensure that workplaces can not become the battlefield for the disputes between parties, because since no political activity can be carried out during the working hours, party units are not allowed to pervade the organizational and management system, they can not make decisions concerning the professional activity of the workplaces, and since other parties also enter workplaces under the same conditions, then that means that the MSZMP should be judged on the basis of the same criteria as any other party, if this text is accepted.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** [...] According to our original idea, the equality of opportunity could have been approached already in the period of transition if all social organizations, including the MSZMP, that received state support during the past forty years would have considered their assets to be public property, and we thought that new political organizations should have been operated from these resources.

[...] Another significant allowance that we made was to acknowledge that the MSZMP – in the spirit of gradualness – does not wish to expose the totality of its assets to public control and use, only a certain part of it. [...] The MSZMP would only account for its assets to its own members. If they only account to their own members, there is a clash of principles between the organizations of the opposition and the MSZMP. The position of the organizations of the opposition is that the MSZMP aquired its assets in a privileged situation, as a state party, therefore these can not be considered to be party assets acquired in an ordinary way. We think that the MSZMP has to account to the society and that is why we can not accept what has been said here.

[...]



Document 75.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 8, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

September 8, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**József Csikós:** [...] In our working committee we held a debate on the publicity of the political conciliation talks first. On several occasions we agreed and reached consensus in the need for these negotiations to be exposed to the widest possible Hungarian audience. The public, the society must be informed about what is happening around the three tables of the political conciliation talks. The medium-level committee, as a result of our repeatedly and emphatically expressed arguments, has decided that the present phase of the medium-level political conciliation talks is public all along with the exception of the first day of the negotiations. A consensus has also been reached in the issue that the Hungarian Television should already start this week its regular 50-minute or 60-minute – today, 45-minute -coverage of agreements and issues to be further debated, which should substantially and objectively inform the public in the order of topics agreed on at the medium-level. The medium level has also accepted the proposal of our working committee that in relation to the issues left out of those weekly 50-60 minutes, the sides should hold a press conference together at a time agreed upon if necessary.

[...] We were unable to agree on the publicity of the meetings of the working committees. The position of the MSZMP is flexible, but different from that of the other sides. In our opinion, this problem would be solved automatically by the 50-60-minute television coverage where the members of the working committees, their best experts could also appear.

[...]

**Miklós Haraszti:** [...] First I would like to point out the two issues where there is no agreement yet, where we would like to reach a consensus in a different way. We would also like the sub-committees to open up for the press and television, and we would like television to continuously record the medium-level talks where the essential work is done. It would not necessarily mean a live coverage, although it would be great to have, but rather that television could broadcast it the following morning.

I would briefly outline the other issue as well: we have bumped into several problems concerning the television coverage – the concrete problems will be detailed by Elemér Hankiss. Some of them are more general and are in connection with the work of television in general – I would like to talk about them in the second part of my reflection.

As far as the publicity of the talks is concerned, the Opposition Roundtable has held the theoretical position from the very beginning of the negotiations that the public as a whole should be involved with these talks as much as possible and the whole population should be informed on what is happening. Our working committee has reached an agreement on the minimum, that is, on the television coverage, on two occasions, both were proposed by the Opposition Roundtable – first, on 10 July, that is, several months ago, and then on 1 August. Making the work in the sub-committees

public (although I know that this topic does not belong to our competence, I would still like to outline the position of the ORT as a theoretical proposition) and all the rest of conciliation talks – the opening of the economic committees and their medium-level committees for the public. It might be an issue to be debated whether it should be raised and discussed at the full session or on the medium level – but I would like to present our request anyway, and I would like to hear the opinion of the other two sides.

[...] We are of the opinion that the leadership of television should not have said that there were certain political conditions of starting the coverage, and they should not have delayed it for months with this pretext. We do not think it is right either that the MSZMP still insists on controlling the coverage from above; their position includes that the topics of the coverage should be decided upon on the medium level on each occasion.

[...]

**Elemér Hankiss:** [...] We know that equal opportunities at the elections are impossible to provide since it is impossible to counterbalance the enormous amount of the MSZMP's assets, its apparatus, and the rest of its might. Therefore it would be quite important to try to smooth out this inequality of chances – which we have to accept as given – at least in the media. In this respect publicity is considered a fundamental issue by us; we should at least try to help balancing out the political situation which is quite rigidly set at the moment. [...]

The Opposition Roundtable has realized that the election campaign has started informally. When the parties are preparing for the elections, every minute on the air counts. In my opinion we should not wait for the formal start of the election campaign. We have to declare together that in respect of television, the election campaign has already begun. Thus, equal opportunities should be guaranteed from today – or at least we should advance in that direction. In order to contribute to this, our concrete proposal is the following. As we have heard, the leadership of television has accepted that there should be a 50-60-minute weekly coverage of the issues debated here. Additionally we request another thirty minutes twice a week for the organizations of the Opposition Roundtable that they could fill with whatever they want. They would be free to do with this time whatever they want to do – of course keeping to strict moral and political codes. Supervision of it would be provided by a would-be committee comprising the three sides. This possibility has been considered in the working committee several times, and here, around the triangular table as well.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** I would not like to repeat our arguments and pledges in relation to the issue of publicity. The MSZMP took up a position in support of public negotiations, we have agreed on this on the medium level. We are hearing a new proposal which affects the initial agreement. I do not see this as a question whether we accept this proposal or not, but rather as „do we re-negotiate the initial agreement concerning this issue or do we not”. We should also consider whether we would be accused of using the negotiating table for campaign propaganda. The two things should be separated – for better results, if nothing else. [...] Concerning the publicity of the work in the special committees, I would like to call the attention of the representatives of the



Opposition Roundtable to the fact that in respect of the negotiation the really important things are the ones voiced or initiated here. I would like to remind everyone that we were provided quite strong arguments by one of the representatives of the negotiating sides, Iván Pető, in his interview published in the magazine called „Free Democrat”. In it, he voices his opinion that in certain cases the advance can be halted by the very openness and publicity of the negotiation. I would like to call your attention to it; this line of argument has had a strong effect on us. [...]

Concerning the proposals presented by Elemér Hankiss – we will discuss (and discuss with our eyes on the solution) the proposal referring to the thirty-minute programs twice a week. Cutting it up among its members should be the task of the Opposition Roundtable, taking into consideration the opinion of the Third Side as well.

[...]

**Miklós Haraszti:** If the basic principles of unbiased information of the public are honestly upheld by all three sides, then the formal reasoning that the stamp of the medium-level consensus has not been put on these modern principles that are acceptable on a European level, and would also guarantee equal chances in practice, could not justify the facts that no change in this direction has been visible in the work of the television, and that no benevolence whatsoever has been shown by the News on television, for instance, where nothing has changed since these negotiations were started. The viewers did not get closer to the ideas, the faces, the parties and organizations that are here at all. Similarly, the head of the television might naturally think in the absence of instructions from above that the introduction of the parties could only begin when the campaign is started [...]

[...]

**Elemér Hankiss:** [...] The Opposition Roundtable appreciates and thinks highly of the results achieved by several people and programs on television in the past six-twelve months. I am referring to Channel 2 especially, and in it, the program called „On Closing The Day” where quite a number of questions and factors of politics have been objectively presented. They have deserved credit already. We also think that other persons have not been on top of the situation in this respect yet, but we sincerely hope that they would be able to do so in the future.

We firmly believe that neither the Opposition Roundtable nor the trilateral committee has the right to make any decisions concerning personal issues. We are of the opinion that the personal issues in the fundamental institutions of society will be dealt with by the new parliament and the new government, hopefully to the general satisfaction of the society as a whole.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Public life should be public – this has been suggested as an agreement in principles by György Szabad. I fully agree with him. The word „should” springs up naturally – it is part of all kinds of democracy. This idea was voiced first in Hungarian history perhaps by Kölcsey during one of the reform sessions of parliament in Pozsony – but György Szabad is more knowledgeable in these matters than I am. If

it has not been put into practice ever since due to our stormy history, then we do not have to solve it off the cuff here around this table. But I fully agree with the principle; this could be one of the norms in our cooperation. The extension of publicity and the removal of asymmetries are an organic part of this. The MSZMP is trying to move in this direction, our delegation is working for its advancement.

[...]

Document 76.  
Report by the Budapest Embassy of the GDR  
[Information on the talks with Rezső Nyers].  
*September 10, 1989.*



**Letter from GDR Ambassador to Hungary, Gerd Vehres  
to Foreign Minister Osker Fischer  
September 10, 1989<sup>1</sup>**

Dear Comrade Minister:

In addition to my CT 385 from September 10, I would like to inform you of some further aspects of my conversation with Comrade [Rezsö] Nyers.

After I had given an initial position on the decision by the Hungarian government and the following recognition by the Party Presidium, Comrade Nyers replied:

1. Comrade Nyers does not wish the events named to be viewed in the GDR as an anti-GDR campaign.
2. Comrade Nyers believes that a great part of the original problem was caused by the sudden opening of the border with Austria. This fact strengthened the existing intentions among a number of GDR tourists to illegally leave the country. The quickly increasing number of people willing to leave under these existing circumstances makes it impossible to convince such a huge number of people by words or declarations. Were the Hungarian organs to have been placed deep in the affair, that is, in the situation themselves, there would be many large conflicts being started, undesired by both Hungary and the GDR. The political victor in this case is only the FRG. Comrade Nyers expressed his conviction that in the future the Hungarian side must deal with us on a more mutual level. He believes that the present wave of emigration is unique and that later will start to abate, and consequently the problem will become manageable. Related to this, he emphasized once again that the Hungarian decision is only a temporary measure, valid for just a short time. Afterwards the Hungarians will again apply our existing bilateral agreement.

Comrade Nyers stated that the Hungarian leadership had examined up until last month whether the Berlin Formula would make a solution possible. "We wanted very much to proceed, but unfortunately had to find out that with such a number of people willing to leave the country under these concrete conditions in Hungary, success is unfortunately not a possibility." ...

In judging the Hungarian actions one must observe that "Hungary is in a dilemma, we have fallen into a political trap." Hungary could not choose between good and bad, but rather between only bad and worse (I refrained from remarking that with that statement, the GDR is the lesser evil). Comrade Nyers lastly referred to the exceptional nature of the present situation, namely that it was now pushed into a defensive position politically, and he can only hope that it will once again be able to go back on the offensive...

Thus far, the course of today's discussion in the Central Committee of the HSWP permits me to draw attention to still some further things in connection with the entire event:...

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<sup>1</sup> Oskar Fischer further relayed the letter to Günter Mittag and then to all members and candidate members of the SED-Politburo as well on the 11 September 1989.

2. In spite of the verbally declared willingness on behalf of the Hungarians to solve the problem facing the GDR, the discussions with the GDR (Foreign Minister, Head of the Consular Affairs Department, MfS, DRK<sup>2</sup>) represent an attempt at stalling and deliberately misleading the GDR. The Hungarian organs undertook no serious attempts of their own to persuade those GDR citizens wishing to emigrate to return to the GDR. The efforts by our embassy's consular section to contact the GDR citizens in these [refugee] camps and explain the GDR's point of view, were both delayed and impeded.

Simultaneously the Hungarian media provoked and supported a campaign directed against the GDR, which, upon seeing it, encouraged the GDR citizens staying in the camps. Battle groups, which were temporarily placed at the border as reinforcements, were defamed by opposition groups, anti-socialist forces, and the majority of the press.

3. The campaign is judged at the same time to be a coordinated and successful attempt by imperialist states, in particular the FRG, to take advantage of the political and economic position of the HPR to exert pressure on the Hungarian leadership to solve the problem of those GDR citizens wishing to leave with the aim of looking out after all Germans. The imperialist policy of discriminating was here consciously directed to foil, via purposeful insertion of extensive economic means into Hungary, the already initiated solutions in accordance with the Berlin formula for the FRG representation in Berlin and Prague with regard to the HPR. With the massive scale of the migration [*Ausschleusang*] of thousands of GDR citizens, a socialist country will establish a publicly-effective precedent supporting the FRG position, which is not in favor of international laws. That follows the initiated process of expelling Hungary from the socialist state community.

Characteristic for the preparation and implementation of the [*Ausschleusang*] was that the FRG always more openly and directly conducted the maintenance and care of the camp "the consular responsibility for GDR citizens" and the deliberate preparation of the [*Ausschleusang*] campaign. The Hungarian organs tolerated and covered up these acts by the FRG.

Translated by Christiaan Hetzner  
The National Security Archive

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry for State Security, or Stasi, and the [East] German Red Cross, respectively.

Document 77.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 11, 1989.*





**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
September 11, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**József Antall:** ... Up to now we have stuck with the view in the sub-committee that the president should be elected by the Parliament, after the general elections. MSZMP did not agree with it, so the issue was submitted to the intermediate level, and we will have to take up a position there because MSZMP will submit it. (*László Vitézy: But I think...*) We however have to come to a decision now that ... unless MSZMP changes its mind and says they don't want to elect the president and accept that the president will be elected by the new Parliament after the elections, then we will have to decide here because there are fundamental differences within ORT in this issue and we cannot put it off any more ...

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** ... I wonder what those present today had in mind when making the decision last time. I don't want to qualify it in any way, I just would like to say that the Alliance of Free Democrats participated in the talks with the belief that our last decision was made with the intention that it was to be final. The Alliance of Free Democrats – if you remember – asked the negotiating delegation of the Democratic Forum whether they would accept Act I of 1946 bill as is. And the answer to it was yes. So we thought this would be the final decision. (*Viktor Orbán: Excuse me, we did not accept it at that time yet.*) Act I of 1946 as is, with the clause that the president ... (*László Vitézy: This was that clause.*) That was the clause. So we made significant concessions on the jurisdiction of the president – since we had started out with a very different view on it – thinking that it would be our final position. With respect to this the view that it was only a provisional compromise even then is just unacceptable to us. [...]

The first question is whether you have read Mátyás Szűrös's statement in which he sides with the view laid out by the Opposition Roundtable. For if you have, then you have to know that there is no uniform position within MSZMP concerning the prompt election of the president, but there are different opinions too. This would be my question. And my second question is why we should try to find a solution by changing our position, for it is well-known that we have four or five other matters with MSZMP which are still pending. Just to remind you in passing, such is the issue of the Worker's Militia, the issue of party organizations at the workplace, the issue of party properties, etc. [...] Why do we try to anticipate the position of MSZMP, why do we want to accept their position in advance, when we still have four or five undecided issues at hand.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... For the situation – in our view – is the same now for FIDESZ as it was earlier, when we started renegotiating the issue. I want to remind you of the situation in June. We had a position then which we took up together. Then certain organization initiated a change in this position. We, who wanted to stick with our common position, got into a situation – looking at it superficially – in which it looked like we were the ones who made the agreement impossible, though we don't do anything else but stick with

something we have already decided on. And when we have laid all our cards on the table and gone as far as we could.

Now, this thing recalls a similar situation, because what I can see is that earlier we made a decision, very luckily and as a result of the continuously renewed compromises of MDF, in spite of the fact that the original views were very different concerning the president, we managed to find the smallest common multiple where everybody can stop, which can be adopted by all of us, furthermore, it is a defensible position against the MSZMP delegation.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** ... if the SZDSZ delegation had known that it would just be a detour of one week – that is, to get round Act I of 1946 – then we would not have accepted Act I of 1946 either as a basis for negotiation, for we had a very different jurisdiction for the president in mind. So now it seems to us that we accepted as a compromise a solution for the jurisdiction of the president that we would not have supported with good heart at the beginning. We did so because we trusted that it would come out in full, including the method of election. Now the question is leveled at us, you conceded last time, you should do it again, and if you cannot...

[...]

**József Antall:** All the other organization made concessions, those who give up on the ... who came to adopt the view that [...] elected directly, before [the general elections]. It's fully on a par...

[...]

**László Kövér:** ... I believe there are five serious questions here that are really crucial. One is the election law, the second is the issue of the institution of presidency, the third is the financing of the political parties and the issue of MSZMP's property, fourth is the Worker's Militia, and the fifth is the party organizations at the workplace. Now we have an agreement on one issue out of these five, whatever it is like... In my view – at least from our point of view – cannot be regarded as a successful solution, I could even say we take it as a failure. Otherwise it is up to all the parties how they evaluate this agreement.

There are four questions left then, of which there is only one we can decide, to which we can say either yes or no. In the remaining three MSZMP is in the same position. They can say yes or no to the withdrawal of parties from the workplace – they say no. And they can also say yes or no to the Worker's Militia – they say no. There is only one question for which we can say yes or no, and now – according to the present proposal – we should say yes. I believe – at least this is my, our view – we should not say yes to this question when submitted by MSZMP. The hell with them... So my opinion is that we should not come to a consensus in this issue by all means. [...] There is an accepted position, taken up by the Opposition Roundtable. We do not put a veto on anything because we have our own position. We have to stick with it, we submit this as a proposal.

[...]

**József Antall:** ... If MSZMP accepts our proposal of today, then it's no use arguing, that would be great, if they did. But ... they won't. And since they won't accept it, the question for us is whether we want consensus – do we want a compromise like that or not – ... Let's hear the opinion of other organizations too, I think there are only one or two left to speak.

[...]

**István Gaskó:** ... on the one hand, since MSZMP's position has hardened on this issue, which can only be resolved by the congress, and we do expect that the congress will make further concessions on this. What we have in mind is primarily the institution of presidency, the party organizations at the workplace and the party properties. [...] The reform circles of MSZMP seem to support these ideas within the party, and I propose, or the leadership of the Social Democratic Party proposes to the Opposition Roundtable that we should see out this chance, and MSZMP should submit only those bills to the September session of Parliament on which there is consensus. [...] Perhaps this solution will require some toughness, for what I suggest, our position is that we should only sign the bills to be submitted to the Parliament in September at the top level plenary meeting if MSZMP is willing to return to the pending issues after the congress. Otherwise I suggest we should not commit ourselves to signing any agreement.

[...]

**József Antall:** They told us clearly that they would not submit the bills separately, one by one, to the Parliament but they would submit a so-called democracy package. Pozsgay made sure to mention the criminal code so that no one should think they will submit the criminal code and keep the rest for a later time. He said there they would submit it as a package, that's the only way... [...] maybe after the congress it will not be clear on their side who we can talk with at all, we don't know if MSZMP stays alive, who leaves the party and who does not, and who we can negotiate with. It is quite conceivable that the Parliament will dissolve itself... [...] it is quite likely that the government will be overthrown. [...] A situation might arise in which the Parliament is dissolved and new elections are called, and all that we have talked about here for two months will be struck from the agenda, new elections will be called on the basis of the present laws and we will be in an ex lex state.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** ... I don't see why we should accept this. For on the one hand the package is not ready yet, regardless of what we can do in the case of the president. [...] Additionally, the president issue – it has not been said here yet, but obviously everybody is aware of it, I mention it just for good measure – that it does not belong to the fundamental laws. [...] The party organizations at the workplace, the financing of the political parties, the equality of possibilities, the Worker's Militia have always been fundamental issues from the very beginning. So what will happen is that we sacrifice fundamental things for something that is not essential because we do not have a clear position and a strategy to protect our views concerning the party law and other matters.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... the question of dispute for FIDESZ is not what president would be good. This is not an issue. We have not argued for the view that a president elected by the Parliament is better than the one elected directly, or worse. There is no room for dispute here. The question is how we can find a solution for the situation which looks like we are going to have to give an answer to MSZMP's proposal concerning the president, and we should give an answer which would at last result in removing the Presidential Council and something else should replace it, and at the same time we should not make any decision, we should not agree with any measure by signing any agreement which will confront the new Parliament with an accomplished fact. For that's what our hunch comes from: there is no free election of the president until we have had free parliamentary elections.

[...]

**József Antall:** ... the question is, what we have to vote on first is that the position of the Opposition Roundtable we will represent in the political conciliatory committee in the first round is that after free general elections the Parliament should elect the president of the republic. [...] Eight votes for, one abstained, eight organizations voted yes, one, the Christian Democratic Party abstained.

[...]

The next question was brought up like this: if we cannot enforce our view in the course of the negotiations. [...] what is the position taken up by the organizations concerning the solution that only one time – thus not codified in a law, in the constitution, just mentioned in a clause –, just this once, because we consider the present Parliament illegitimate, we [agree to] a direct election, because we cannot just say we do not accept direct election...

[...]

**László Vitézy:** Now who says yes to a second round of negotiations? One, two, three, four, five. (*Károly Vigh, Sándor Keresztes, György Szabad, Csaba Varga, Imre Boross.*) Who is against? One, two, three, four (*Péter Tölgyessy, István Gaskó, László Kövér, László Vitézy.*).

[...] Now who wishes to exercise the right of veto?

**Péter Tölgyessy:** We do.

**László Vitézy:** Now, two exercise the right of veto. (*Péter Tölgyessy, László Kövér.*) A third one. (*István Gaskó.*) That's three vetoes. The League cannot vote... cannot veto.

[...]

**József Antall:** Are we going to say that ORT does not have a uniform position on this issue and announce that the Opposition Roundtable has a difference of opinion in this matter... [...] Or else we will attempt to solve it by saying that there is no final decision on this issue and therefore it is relegated to the ones requiring special procedure, so it will be brought before the meeting to be conducted by special procedure...

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... We have to consider what we are going to say when MSZMP has already put forward its proposal. We can say two things then. One thing we can say is this: MSZMP has submitted its proposal, thank you very much for it, we presented ours the other day, we will think it over, and we just leave the thing floating in the air. [...] The other thing we can do is that we just get into the dispute that is bound to arise. MSZMP will then say this is our position, and we don't say that OK, we will think it over, thank you for letting us know, something will happen, or what have you, but we say we have this, no matter what you, gentlemen have, this is what we have. And then the dispute will take place there, the outcome of which might be along the lines József Antall has just described.

[...]

**Sándor Keresztes:** ... But please, it will become evident that we do not accept the referendum, that we are against it, and it will be publicized all around by the radio, the television and the press, that's for sure. You should reckon with it! So this [is just] playing with the time. Not to speak of the fact that by this we jeopardize the transition which may lead to a constitutional state. We are here to do politics, not to make declarations of principles...

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** ... The question is not whether the Oppositions Roundtable endorses the direct or indirect election of the president. The question is whether the Opposition Roundtable feels authorized to make any pact concerning the institution of presidency, before the free elections, or not.

[...]

**József Antall:** We think we are entitled to do so! We are authorized to do that based on Act I of 1946. That's what is written down. We feel we are authorized.

**Károly Vigh:** That's why we are talking about it!

[...]

**János Kis:** Well, we should simply say what József Antal has suggested before, in my view – that corresponds well to the situation at the moment, it does not hurt anybody in any way, and it does not induce any charges on us – we will take up a position on this only when we can clearly see how far we can get in the other issues at the negotiations.

[...]



Document 78.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 11, 1989.*





**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

September 11, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**István Somogyvári:** The next debated issue is that of the president of the republic. The sides have agreed on most of the aspects of the institution of the president of the republic. The basis of the consensus is the principle that the institution of the president of the republic would be created through an amendment to the Constitution on the basis of Act I of 1946, but also with contemporary relevance.

As the sides agreed, the amendment would also explicitly state that in Hungary the head of state is the president of the republic who represents the unity of the nation and guards the democratic functioning of the state organization.

We have also agreed on the level of working committees that the institution of vice-president is unnecessary; in case of temporary incapacitation the Speaker of Parliament would substitute the president with certain limitations – he would not have the right to return a law to Parliament for re-consideration, he would not have the right to dissolve the Parliament, and he would have the right of granting pardon only in the case of those validly sentenced. During the time when he stands in for the president, the Speaker of Parliament would not be allowed to act as a member of parliament and the function of Speaker would be taken over temporarily by a deputy Speaker appointed by the Parliament.

The sides have agreed that strictly set incompatibility regulations are needed in the case of the function of the president. It is incompatible with other state, social or political functions and any other gainful employment.

An agreement has also been reached concerning the scope of authority of the president. This agreement has become complete in the eyes of all three sides today, thus, we can now state that the solution to problems debated so far (such as the announcement of laws, the right of returning laws to Parliament for further consideration, and the right to dissolve Parliament) seem to be acceptable for all three sides with certain corrections to the text made necessary by objections of the Third Side. The three sides have also agreed that the decisions made by the president should require a ministerial signature as it had been prescribed in Act I of 1946 – with a couple of exceptions, mainly the authorities in relation to the Parliament. [...]

There are some debated issues still. The first one is that the MSZMP and the Opposition Roundtable also intend to state on the basis of Act I of 1946, that the president of the republic is Commander in Chief of the army as well. The Third Side's opinion, on the other hand, is that the Commander in Chief of the armed forces should be the President of the Council of Ministers. [...] The construction that we all consider acceptable in relation to the head of state and the government is such, that in our opinion, which is identical to that of the Opposition Roundtable's, this licence can only be granted to the president of the republic.

[...]

**József Antall:** [...] We think it is quite important that the president of the republic should have the licences of Commander in Chief with the necessary guarantees partly

because it is an element of constitutional order in constitutional monarchies, in parliamentary and in presidential republics as well; and partly because in every case when it is lacking, it could bring about special situations like the one characteristic of the period behind us in Hungary where – through certain constitutional nuances that are not worth talking about in detail now – the Commander in Chief of the armed forces was in fact the Secretary General of the MSZMP as the chairman of the Defence Council etc. There is no need to further elaborate on this. We just think it would be an absurd solution in respect of constitutional law.

[...]

**István Somogyvári:** The next debated issue is the time of electing the president of the republic. The MSZMP has previously said that they think it is necessary to elect the president as soon as possible, indeed in this year already, in the face of the current domestic political situation, and also in view of the parliamentary elections. The MSZMP insists upon holding this position. At the same time, if there were consensus in this between the sides, that is, if they agreed on electing the president of the republic this year, that is, as soon as possible which would practically mean within sixty days of accepting it in Parliament, then we could seriously consider abolishing the Presidential Council right away, and in the interim, the substitution mechanism prescribed in this amendment to the Constitution would become valid. But only in that case.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, the Opposition Roundtable may speak now.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** According to the resolution of the Opposition Roundtable the new Parliament should have the authority to elect the president of the republic. Our line of argumentation – which we will present later when we talk about the method of election – entails that if the president of the republic is elected by Parliament, then the election should be done by a parliament which is fully legitimate, the legitimacy of which has been debated by no one, the legitimacy of which originates in the first free elections in Hungary.

Therefore we propose that until the elections a temporary solution should prevail; let us set up the institution of the president – in the spirit of Act I of 1946, – through allowing the Speaker of Parliament to stand in for him until the new, freely elected Parliament can elect him. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, now the Third Side may speak.

**Imre Nagy:** The Third Side is of the opinion that these topics – „When should the president be elected?” and „How should the president be elected?” – are closely connected. Thus, although initially we have agreed on proceeding from question to question, now we would like to suggest that we should talk about these two questions together, also because the reasoning of the Opposition Roundtable made a natural connection between them.

[...]

**István Somogyvári:** [...] In our view, the country needs a head of state during the period of transition who enjoys firm legitimacy; through a direct election he would be granted the very power he would need to resolve the crisis of confidence in society. At the same time, in respect of the licences of the head of state the sides hold the same opinion – these licences are sufficient for the president of the republic to have relevant and respected powers, and are not enough – and must not be enough – to allow him to create a kind of dictatorship of the head of state.

[...] Nevertheless, we should not forget that if the head of state were elected by the Parliament, then we would go against a basic principle which is most probably regarded as important by all the sides. This principle is that if possible, it should be avoided to let one power centre rule the country. If a certain power centre, a party or a coalition of parties wins the parliamentary elections, then it would bend legislation to its will with its majority of the seats, the government would be formed by the same coalition, and the same coalition would elect the president of the republic as well. There would be no counterbalance, there would be no mechanism for the rightful protection of minority interests, no institution to deal with possible problems stemming from the autocratic attitudes of the sole centre of power.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I believe the sides have agreed that we want to see a parliamentary system in Hungary. It is a commonplace in political law that it is a characteristic of parliamentary systems to have a head of state elected by the parliament. [...]

In our opinion, a political system with two strong points of legitimacy, namely the parliament and the president of the republic, can be quite fragile. [...]

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** [...] The MSZMP could make the situation easier for the Opposition Roundtable if it tried to enlist and give a couple of additional arguments to back up its position. I have a question in connection with this, and a response could also make it possible for us to get closer to your position. The expression „stability” or „instability” was included in all the opinions voiced so far without exception. I would like to ask the MSZMP to describe – if such a situation can be pictured at all – how those unstable circumstances would look like when it would be necessary to have a president of the republic of the fashion of your proposal. We would really like to know exactly what those situations – imaginary situations, naturally – would be where the existence of a president of this type would be a solution in itself. If there are concrete situations like that, then which of those situations would be impossible to solve through what we proposed, that is, by the Speaker of Parliament with substitute authorities?

[...]

**József Antall:** [...] It would be useful to define a consensus in relation to the details of setting up the institution on the basis of what has been said here; the method and time of election – I stress this again – should be discussed at the end of these negotiations together with the rest of the open questions in connection with the transition and we should make a decision on them at the same time, because it is a

political decision. And this political decision on three, four open issues should be made at the same time. For the full session – maybe next week, I do not know how fast we are – we should connect up these decisions to make with all the open questions concerning fundamental issues and then we can decide on this issue of a clause as well, at the same time.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** After carefully listening to József Antall's proposal, I can come back to Viktor Orbán's question and to the proposal just made. I believe we can state that there is consensus between us in respect of the institution of the president of the republic. The MSZMP also accepts that the open question here is a fundamental political question, the legal expression of which should not be discussed in today's session.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** [...] I think the statement that in this issue there is consensus would be quite misleading in itself. The way of coming into existence is an inherent element of an institution like this. We believe it would be more accurate to say that in certain questions there is consensus, and in other questions a difference of opinions still remains.

[...]

**József Antall:** [...]it would be reasonable to put out this issue to the end of the negotiations by saying that the institution of the president of the republic in view of Act I of 1946, etc. has been accepted by the three sides, but no agreement has been reached yet in respect of the method and time of election. We should simply state the fact accurately.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Honoured Participants! The delegation of the MSZMP considers it acceptable to interpret the consensus as it was just presented by József Antall. We are of the opinion that there are three open questions left. In terms of constitutional law – method of election and duration of the office; as a political question, the time of election. If this is accepted by the Opposition Roundtable and the Third Side, we agree to stating the consensus as it was phrased by József Antall. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Would the Opposition Roundtable like to add anything?

**Gábor Horn:** We can accept it as it is.

**Imre Nagy:** The Third Side also accepts it.

[...]

**István Somogyvári:** The last important topic would be the discussion on two sub-questions of the constitutional definition of the armed forces and the police. Concerning the constitutional regulations governing the armed forces and the police, the sides have agreed on everything with one or two exceptions that I would not even present here.

The first debated issue is that the MSZMP and the Third Side, in accordance with the current scope of authority of the police, would like to keep state security a task of the police, because despite the fact that it is a special task, it belongs to the police. The Opposition Roundtable has suggested that a separate organization should be set up which would be independent from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the police, and would only be subordinated to the Council of Ministers, in a manner and under a name they have presented. We do not agree with this.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** [...] Following the German example, we should have an agency to protect the Constitution which is supervised by the prime minister, but which is also provided constitutional control by the constitutional court – if we agree to create one; the relevant committee of Parliament should also control this agency. We think it is extremely important that such activities of the state should be controlled closely and by several institutions, since it is only the institutional guarantees that can provide practical security against the abuse of authority of state security agencies. Therefore, we would like to phrase the relevant paragraphs and sentences of the Constitution without listing the tasks of political police as a task of the police.



Document 79.

Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary  
[Gorbachev is worried about the dissolution of the Empire].  
*September 11, 1989.*





**Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary**  
**[Gorbachev is worried about the dissolution of the Empire]**  
September 11, 1989

I could not penetrate his secret thoughts [when Chernyaev stayed with Gorbachev during his vacation in Crimea], when he dictated to me an article against the Right and the Left and sharply criticized the demands of stability. What kind of stability do they want, since we are in a revolution? If there is stability, this means an end to *perestroika*, stability means stagnation (*zastoi*). There is no room for stability during the revolution. So then why does he fume at those who raise a fuss [*balamutit*]?! His state of mind is free from panic. As if deep in his soul he is convinced that he would not sink...He repeats again and again: if Russia raises its head, then it will begin...What exactly will begin? He is firmly against the formation of a Communist Party of the RSFSR, against granting the RSFSR the full status of a Union Republic. He said to the Politburo: this would be the end of the empire.

*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 80.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 15, 1989.*



**Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
September 15, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**László Sólyom:** ... With respect to the party law the question is left open. Party organizations at the workplace. I think our position on this is the same. (*József Antall: The same.*) That's what we will follow, since they will obviously not make any concession either...

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** It is almost certain that we will not manage to agree on this, the political situation simply does not make it possible. But since several leaders of MSZMP have stated that they do not agree with the position of the party, my opinion is that the congress is likely to bring significant changes. Therefore I would put these matters in the package to be discussed further.

**István Gaskó:** I agree with this, for that's what I also proposed at the previous ORT meeting.

[...]

**József Antall:** I have to mention that there was a question-answer with Pozsgay. [...] We should get a statement from the government saying that this government will submit it to the Parliament separately in the same way like the others. Let's separate it from the rest of the open questions and give the answer on the basis of the previous promise made by the government. We will explain that we insist on it and that the government should submit it separately. We have received a promise, so let's stick with that.

[...]

**János Kis:** I also agree that it is justified and effective to remind them the promise that the government will submit this issue to the Parliament. I would stick the clause to it saying that if the Parliament does not make a decision which the Opposition Roundtable can accept, then we want to re-negotiate this issue with MSZMP as well.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** I object to all the solutions proposed so far. I believe we do not really follow a logical route here. My question is the following. Is there any guarantee that if this opposition solution is submitted to the Parliament in the form we have agreed on concerning the elimination of party organizations at the workplace – as has been proposed by József Antall, and, if I understand well, also supported by János Kis. [...] I think there is no guarantee. There might be a chance. But I believe the CC of MSZMP has a valid resolution, and maybe I'm more pessimistic than others sitting here but I can hardly believe that this Parliament would rule otherwise when the CC has a valid resolution. [...]

We should not let it be submitted to the Parliament. Or if we do, we may as well let everything submitted.

**László Sólyom:** What makes you think that it will not be submitted to the Parliament, if we don't endorse it? The difference is whether they will take it there without us, or it's whether they submit it as "A" and "B" ... not in the sense that we have endorsed both, but as two separate positions. [...]

**Viktor Orbán:** In my view this is a political issue unfortunately we have not talked about so far, but I think if we follow this logic, then there is only one think the Opposition Roundtable can do, considering that MSZMP has got a weapon in its hand which can be aimed at us any time, namely: if you don't concede, we will take it to the Parliament. Based on this, if that's the kind of logic we follow, then we might as well have started the negotiations on our knees. [...] we do have the strength, and we don't have to approve of it, and we do have to say it should not go to the Parliament but it has to be negotiated further like all the other issues on which we have not managed to agree yet.

[...]

**György Szabad:** I believe we should make our position clear – our negative standpoint – and indicate we are ready to negotiate. If the government submits our clarified position, that's their business.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** ... The issue of the workplace is not a separate one, well, we don't have a party law! What I don't understand is what is going to be submitted to the Parliament? So it's just not the case that there is something emerging here, that there is a complete party law which lacks one element that can be submitted in two different versions, but there is no party law. It cannot be submitted in September because fundamental elements are missing. Well, the financing part, the original MSZMP ... or, I'm sorry, the draft worked out by the Ministry of Justice would have included the provisional regulation of financing in the party law too. We have not made any progress on this.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** There are three open questions in the party law. The party functions filled by members of the armed forces, financing and the workplace.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** These are the yes votes, who is against? (*Viktor Orbán, Iván Pető, Gábor Horn.*) The nay is meant to say that it's a veto, or ...

**Viktor Orbán:** It means FIDESZ does not endorse the submission of two versions of the bill to the Parliament in this matter. That's what it means. We can have to bills submitted to the Parliament, one by MSZMP and one by us. That's what is meant by what we say.

[...]

**Tibor Baranyai:** There is some logic in what FIDESZ is saying... [...] It does have a logic with a view to the October party congress, because that's where the relations of power will be decided, and perhaps we are going to have a better negotiating position afterwards, but maybe it'll be worse. So it may turn out that we will hurt that chances of Pozsgay or somebody else who cannot say at the congress to what extent they have managed to come to an agreement with the opposition on issues of the transition. So maybe we will hurt the interests of certain reform circles. This is quite possible. At the same time it's also possible – if that's what the congress will bring as a result – that the new negotiating partner will be much tougher than the former one.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** ... The first thing is the method of electing the president: should he be elected by the Parliament or by the people? The positions are clear. These are the two possibilities. Direct election by a referendum or election by the Parliament. József Antall has the floor.

**József Antall:** We have to reconcile two very difficult problems here. One is to try to maintain the Roundtable and the further cooperation of the different organizations of the opposition. This is one thing. The other is what position is taken up in this issue by ... [...] The solution here might be that we prepare a draft version which includes indirect election by the Parliament in the bill in a general sense, but appends a clause to it with a special view to the transition, which can be formulated constitutionally in a way that in case the president is elected ... before the parliamentary elections, that can only be done by direct election.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** My proposal would be that [...] we should handle this issue the same way we have dealt with the rest, so we should accept the constitution but we should put this question among those pending further negotiations...

[...]

**Imre Boross:** Well, the October 6 date rather urges us to make a decision beforehand. (*Károly Vigh: That's right.*) Why should we? The reason is that in my view – in our view – certain combinations of persons in a given place are viable combinations only as long as they can be accepted in general. That's the first question. The second question. I want to say it again that the public in this country is thick and tired of politics. At the moment it seems that we are going to – if I may put it this way – turn rusty on five fundamental issues. In five, if I'm right, in four or five fundamental issues. If we continue to do that, the negotiations will break off because of us, we cannot stabilize the result we've achieved so far, and the part of the public which tends towards a compromise will definitely put the blame on us.

[...]

**János Kis:** ... Yes, excuse me, then I would just put the question in an abstract form as to whether it is certain that Imre Pozsgay will be the presidential candidate after the October 6 congress? (*Interruption: Not certain.*) Not certain. That's my comment on what Imre Boross said that the combinations involving persons will not for sure look like they do now.

My other comment is whether we will look as if we have turned rusty. I believe we will not, for two reasons. On the one hand there is a bunch of questions here on which it is obvious and justifiable that it was MSZMP that turned rusty. We have not come to an agreement because MSZMP has backed out on some concessions it has made earlier. It has stiffened its position and forced even its leading members to announce publicly that they voted with a minority in the Central Committee. The position of MSZMP in this matter is unsustainable. On the other hand, if we separate these issues and say that we agree on what we can now, and we are ready to negotiate the issues further that we cannot agree on now, then we don't appear to be not willing to make a compromise.

[...]

**György Szabad:** ... In my view we have to preserve the unity of the Opposition Roundtable, even if we cannot come to an agreement on the issue of the president, but I'm not sure if we can. What can the Opposition Roundtable do if it cannot come to an agreement? It will publish two communiqués. One will be issued by those who are willing to accept the direct election of the president and who are not willing to accept the direct election of the president. [...] The responsibility they assume is enormous for both sides, but it is much greater for those who say the opposition members, the democrats do not wish to agree to a free election. [...] I'm willing to change my mind in this respect because my tactics are different from those of other people. There is no way to make any concession in the issue of the Worker's Militia. We cannot make a concession in the party law. But, to be frank, if we put the jurisdiction of this president in due bind ... Well, we can stipulate that the election is valid only if a fairly large proportion with a right of vote turn out. Only that person can become president, relative ... I've said this before. Relative majority is not enough. Only absolute majority. So 50% plus one. [...] If that is not achieved, then the Parliament should decide between those two who have received the most votes. [...]

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The position of SZDSZ is that the Alliance of Free Democrats cannot sign an agreement which contains a directly elected president.

[...]

**György Szabad:** That's clear. Can we interpret it as saying that you will sign it only if there is a clause appended to it in which you state that you do not endorse this point of the agreement? But you do not put a veto.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** FIDESZ has something to say on this issue. [...] So I believe that if we make a concession in this matter, then MSZMP will never concede in any of the rest of the



issues. I think it is not right not only in principle ... I think the difference here is not just a matter of principle but we see the political situation differently. This is the only issue in which the Opposition Roundtable practically ... (*László Kövér: The only trump-card.*) Yes, our only trump-card, you can put it that way. In case we accept the offer made by MSZMP, in whatever form, even just by nodding, at this phase of the negotiations, then in the next phase to which we forwarded several more important issues we will not have any good arguments. There MSZMP will say they won't concede, and the same thing will happen that has happened before. There will not be a single situation in which MSZMP would have to depend on our saying yes. [...] We are not going to sign an agreement according to which it is not free elections that are held first in Hungary but presidential elections.

[...]

**László Sólyom:** ... Who votes [...] for György Szabad's conciliatory proposal, so the two thirds turnout, and then, in the second round the Parliament will elect. (*Csaba Varga, István Domonkos, József Antall, Imre Boross, yes.*) One, two, three,... five. [...] Who is against? (*Viktor Orbán, Gábor Horn, Péter Tölgyessy, István Gaskó.*)

**István Gaskó.** We are against it.

**Tibor Baranyai:** I abstain.

**György Szabad:** The social democrats partly abstain.

**László Sólyom:** Well, among those who voted nay, who want to put a veto? (*János Kis, Péter Tölgyessy, Viktor Orbán raise their hand.*) Two. Two put a veto on it.

**József Antall:** Then we will have to make separate statements... Then there is no other way. [...] In this case FIDESZ and all the others who did not agree will announce that they do not agree on this issue.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** ... The Alliance of Free Democrats requests that those who endorse the direct election of the president should make their statement on Monday, so they should announce it at the highest level on Monday.

[...]

**Viktor Orbán:** If we go to that negotiating room and announce what has been said by József Antall, then we will have to reckon with making a statement which will prevent the Opposition Roundtable from signing anything. [...] On our part, in case this is announced not on Monday but today, we will paralyze the meeting, that is, we will stand up, [...] we will say the position which is submitted is not the position of the Opposition Roundtable but something else. For the Opposition Roundtable does not have a position in this issue, and you better consider the fact that MSZMP will be in a situation that they won't have anybody to agree with this afternoon.

[...]

**József Antall:** What's the difference?

**Viktor Orbán:** FIDESZ does not want to obstruct the issues in which we already have a consensus. (*József Antal: Then what?*) So it does not want to overturn the Opposition Roundtable, it would like to ... (*Unintelligible interruption.*) see the things we have agreed on passed. (*György Szabad: Right.*) In this issue – the issue of the president – not. So we would like to see a decision made at the meeting of the Opposition Roundtable today that all the issues in which we have already come to an agreement in the Opposition Roundtable, or the agreement is possible, should be decided today. (*József Antall: Yes...*) So if today the issue of the president is brought up at the Opposition Roundtable, or at the trilateral table, then our overturning the table would also mean that there will be no consensus in those questions either. While on Monday, on our part, we will, I think – this is not settled yet...

**József Antall:** (*Cuts in.*) Then we would like to, because we should really be honest to one another here. Let' say what the thing is!

**Viktor Orbán:** I would like to finish my sentence. If we do it today, we will have a situation in which we can not come to an agreement on any question. If it is brought up on Monday, then we will consider the possibility that we won't sign it, we won't sign the agreement, but as for the established questions in which there is consensus otherwise we will not put obstacle in the way of signing it.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I can say the same, the Alliance of Free Democrats will not raise difficulties either.

Document 81.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 15, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political coordinating committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

September 15, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** [...] I have written a letter to the delegation of each negotiating partner in order to interpret the consensus. It seems that so far we have not managed to get over with this negotiation, therefore I think it is useful to voice my proposal on this level of negotiations as well. Please, weigh the possibility of proceeding along these lines and adopt my proposal toward an agreement.

After addressing the partners, I wrote the following in this letter:

„For your information, I am sending you the position of the delegation of the MSZMP to assist the interpretation of the consensus between the negotiating sides.

In the trilateral negotiations we have reached the stage of closing the present phase of negotiations. The government has to present to the Parliament the draft bills that it withdrew at the beginning of the summer negotiations for the sake of reaching a consensus. Our aim is to reach a consensus, because that is how we can consider the negotiations to have achieved their goals.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, we inform the negotiating partners about the following:

- 1) The consensus has to be announced at the full session convening on 18th of this month, on the basis of the work of the medium-level political conciliation committee.
- 2) The creation of the consensus is based on a global agreement, as we have repeatedly stressed during the negotiations. That is to say, the partial consensuses will become valid and become trilateral consensuses all at the same time, in the framework of the global consensus.
- 3) In the context of clarifying the concept of consensus, we can say that a consensus can be announced if:
  - a) there is a complete agreement on the text of the draft bills in general;
  - b) all sides accept the disclosure of two different opinions, that is to say, the different positions have been recorded;
  - c) all sides agree to indicate that they have agreed in the principles in relation to a certain draft bill or agreement they have not discussed for technical reasons, and they will present the final text within a certain period.
- 4) If the agreement is reached as described in point 3), the negotiations can be considered successful and closed with a consensus. It is useful to arrive at a consensus in each of the questions because an agreement can only be made in that case.
- 5) If there is no consensus reached on the full session, the government will still be obliged to present the draft bills to the Parliament after the full session, supplemented with the results of the negotiations. However, without a consensus, the government will not be in a position to fulfil the obligations that would flow from the existence of an agreement.

Budapest, September 14, 1989.”

[...]

**József Antall:** The Opposition Roundtable proposes to add to point 3 a point d) after point 3.c) saying that issues that do not form part of the list of the draft bills discussed, and need further discussion, will be discussed later. By this we mean that there may be issues that are not part of the draft bills discussed but have not been agreed upon. These are either of the nature of a declaration of intention or minor details which do not hinder the work of Parliament and will be hopefully resolved on future negotiations. The Opposition Roundtable has defined the position that we would decide in the case of each issue when it is discussed whether we can go on discussing it with this amendment.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** [...] I agree with this proposal and it also expresses the intention of the delegation of the MSZMP to close the present phase of negotiations which had the aim of preparing legislation, and let us continue negotiations about outstanding issues.

[...]

**The Speaker:** Thank you. If I understood well what has been said, the negotiating parties agree that we should now discuss the issues that remained open during the negotiations about „fundamental laws” [...] I think we all agree that there are three such „fundamental” laws: the modification of the Constitution, the electoral law and the party law.

[...]

**Péter Tölgessy:** The Opposition Roundtable has discussed the issue of the Constitutional Court and has arrived at the following conclusion: The Opposition Roundtable can accept the establishment of the Constitutional Court with the following conditions:

First of all, we insist that the Constitutional Court should only be included in the text of the Constitution when the partners have already reached an agreement on the whole Constitution. That is, if we have arrived at a consensus concerning all issues related to the Constitution, the last paragraph to be recorded should be the one related to the Constitutional Court.

The Opposition Roundtable considers it important that the sides agree in the whole issue of the Constitutional Court, [...] that agreements are made concerning all details related to the issue of the Constitutional Court. [...] We insist that the Parliament should not be able to alter the conclusions of the Constitutional Court by either a simple majority of votes or by a qualified majority. That is to say, if the Constitutional Court repeals a law or some other provision, than that provision has to be repealed without the possibility of appeal, and there should be no possibility for it to remain in force. Better to say, there would be one possibility: the Parliament modifies the Constitution, making the law in question a constitutional one. We have another proposal concerning the same issue: anyone, that is to say, even a single citizen, should be able to bring an action for the examination of the Constitution. [...] Our proposal is to set the number of the members of the Constitutional Court at 15. According to our proposal, Constitutional Judges should be elected for 9 years in the

following way: 5 judges should be commissioned by the current Parliament, 5 by the Parliament to be elected, and the last five would be commissioned 3 years later. Naturally, the new Parliament can act differently.

[...]

**István Somogyvári:** The next issue is whether the activities related to state security should be listed among the tasks of the police. There is a protracted argument among the negotiating sides in this issue; and I would like to repeat the position of the MSZMP briefly.

According to our position, the denominations of „state security” or „protection of the Constitution” can change, the institution being developed. [...] In our opinion, it is not possible to modify the Constitution in order to determine future legislation and organizational work. Therefore we do not exclude ourselves theoretically from modifying this institution, however, concerning the issue of providing for it in the Constitution, I suggest that the other two sides accept our proposal not to tie the hands of the current or of the future Parliament in legislation.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The Opposition Roundtable is well aware of the fact that this issue can not be finally concluded on the level of the Constitution. Our proposal aimed at influencing the legislator and the authorities deciding in the issue of the police to remove state security police from the institution of the police.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** The negotiating delegation of the MSZMP [...] proposes the following text: „The basic task of the police is protecting public security and internal order. The detailed rules related to the police and to the security of the state shall be determined by a regulation of constitutional force.”

**The Speaker:** I ask the negotiating partners if they agree with the proposal of the MSZMP?

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The Opposition Roundtable accepts the proposal of the MSZMP.

**Péter Bugár:** We also accept it.

[...]

**Mátyás Budzsákliá:** [...] Alternative a) related to the operation of the parties should be the following: „Parties can not create and operate organizations at workplaces (places of service, educational institutions).” [...] We suggest the following as alternative b): „Parties can establish organizations at workplaces under equal conditions, with the restriction that these can not carry out political activities during working hours; can not pervade the organizational and management system of the workplace and can not make decisions concerning the professional activity of the workplace.” [...] A further open question concerns the restriction to the party

membership of members of the armed forces and armed bodies. We propose alternative solutions to this problem as well. We repeat our position that we think it is possible to restrict the party membership of the members of armed forces and armed bodies on the national level, in a way that the members and officials of high-ranking bodies should not be [members of parties], and we can expand..., we can accept that on the level of regions or counties as well. However, we can not accept the restriction on a lower level than that.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** It is not quite clear how this relates to our proposal of last time. We can accept this position in relation to the army; [however] last time we suggested to make a difference between the army and the police in this issue. In relation to the police the proposal is close to ours and is basically acceptable, however, it is not acceptable in relation to the police.

[...]

**Iván Pető:** I have mentioned another open question. We have not discussed the issue of the complete lack of agreement concerning the financing of the transition. In the draft bill prepared by the Ministry of Justice, it was mentioned among the concluding clauses, and we have not approached any realistic solution in this issue; the organizations of the Opposition Roundtable see no securities concerning the way and the sources of financing and providing for the operation of these organizations during the transition period and the period subsequent to the elections until the time when norms guarantee it clearly. It seems to me that we have not even worked out alternative proposals to this problem. I would also like to comment that in this issue as well as in all other issues where it is theoretically possible to formulate alternative proposals, the positions are rather wide apart, as József Antall has said.

[...]

**Mátyás Budzsákli:** It is true that the issue of the financing of the transition has been repeatedly mentioned during the negotiations. We have, however, always said that while we do not accept the inclusion of this issue into the conception of the foundation, operation and management of the parties, we are ready to co-operate in order that financing is fulfilled.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** [...] All of the outstanding issues depend on the political developments of the near future, and a newly elected Parliament can act independently in these issues. Until then, we consider it to be a real compromise proposal that the current Parliament receives these propositions as alternatives. I think I was clear enough also when I referred to the political developments of the near future.

The other thing is, in connection with the comment of Mátyás Budzsákli, that the delegation of the MSZMP has never refused to discuss the issue of the terms of operation and financing of parties established in the transition period or now.



However, on the basis of the claim mentioned above, the MSZMP has already offered part of its assets and budget, and it would like to arrange for the transition period from this fund, through the government and with the reservation that the agreement would be included when preparing next year's budget, but it does not belong directly to the issue of formulating the party law; for the MSZMP this is one of the steps – showing the MSZMP's good intentions – that establish and strengthen confidence, and for the other parties it is a condition of their operation. Please accept our proposal on these grounds.

[...]

**Tölgyessy Péter:** [...] It is apparent that we can not subject to normative conditions the contribution of the current year's central budget to the transitional financing of the parties. There is simply no norm to relate it to. [...] On the other hand, in the case of financing the elections, we can identify a strict and well-definable norm: the appointment of candidates. Anyone who has appointed a candidate – which is itself subjected to very strict conditions: you have to produce 750 signatures – will be entitled to a proportionate amount of subvention under strict normative conditions. I have to stress that not only the organizations of the Opposition Roundtable but the MSZMP, those of the Third Side, those who are not present here and independent candidates are also entitled to this subvention. [...] Therefore I would like to ask the delegation of the MSZMP to exert a great amount of pressure on the government in order that this sum reaches the size we have proposed. [...]

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** [...] State subvention should not encourage the unjustified appointment of candidates. Therefore I suggest that we define the total amount of the state subvention; the MSZMP acknowledges these claims and will support accepting the proposal of the amount of 100 million for this purpose.



Document 82.  
Meeting of the Opposition Roundtable.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 18, 1989.*



**The meeting of the Opposition Roundtable**  
September 18, 1989  
(Verbatim text of the video-taped record. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** ... I think the next question is the issue of the president. I don't want to open a long dispute here now, so I'll tell you what the opinion of the Alliance of Free Democrats is. The Alliance of Free Democrats examined the minutes of the first period and found that it would have the right to put a veto on this issue, even one organization has the right of veto, and it would then mean that the Opposition Roundtable could not express its position in this issue. Of course we don't want to obstruct those members of the Opposition Roundtable who think the introduction of this institution is the right thing, therefore we propose that those who endorse it should sign the agreement at the plenary session. On its part the Alliance of Free Democrats cannot do it, instead it will issue a brief statement in this issue, explaining briefly and in a low profile why it could not endorse taking this step. This would be the proposal of the Alliance of Free Democrats, so it opens up the way free and gives up the right of veto. Is that acceptable?

**József Antall:** Let's have the others, for we announced it then, and we agreed that the other organizations would make their statement on Monday...

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I don't call upon those five organizations which voted yes. FIDESZ ... I don't know if the official representative of FIDESZ is present now?

**Zsuzsa Szelényi:** (*The beginning of the sentence is unintelligible*) ... in this issue we join the Alliance of Free Democrats.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Thank you very much. I ask the Social Democratic Party now.

**István Gaskó:** We already said last week that we would not put a veto.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Yes, that means the Social Democratic Party will sign the agreement...

**István Gaskó:** We will decide. We are still considering it.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** They haven't decided yet. Thank you very much. I want to ask the League now. (*László Vitézy, Mihály Csákó and Zoltán Pokorni are talking, leaning to each other.*)

**László Vitézy:** The League ... We are discussing it! (*Laugh.*) Guys, I don't think ... (*The rest of the sentence is unintelligible.*) (*The three representatives of the League – Vitézy, Csákó and Pokorni – leave the room.*)

**Several:** It does not have a right of veto.

**József Antall:** We have a question concerning this. Our question is that the consensus has several themes. One is the modification of the constitution... Is it the case that the free

democrats don't sign it at all, the whole constitution, or is it just this clause that they won't sign?

**Péter Tölgyessy:** We believe this issue is so important that we would mislead the people by not signing only this part of the agreement. Therefore we won't sign the whole agreement. (*József Antall: So the whole agreement.*) So it's not that we sign and append a clause to it, but we just don't sign the whole agreement.

**József Antall:** So you won't sign the whole agreement?

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Yes. It's the whole agreement that we won't sign.

**József Antall:** Obviously FIDESZ too, since they are similar in everything, will then acknowledge it.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I don't know. I don't know what FIDESZ will say...

**György Szabad:** I would like to make concrete ... the whole agreement. This means that the agreement concerning the modification of the constitution, or it will extend to ...

**Péter Tölgyessy:** It extends to the whole agreement.

**György Szabad:** All of them, including the election law...

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Including the election law. Naturally.

**József Antall:** The whole of the negotiations today. All our work so far, in other words...

**Péter Tölgyessy:** That's right. I don't know what the position of FIDESZ is, I swear to God.

**József Antall:** They have already stated that...

**Péter Tölgyessy:** But does FIDESZ have the same opinion in this issue as ...?

**Zsuzsa Szelényi:** Yes. We don't want to deprive anybody of signing the agreement, but we cannot make further concessions on the issues we have not been able to decide, therefore we cannot accept the whole pact that will be signed.

**Imre Boross:** Am I to interpret it that you will sign it ... (*Zsuzsa Szelényi: No.*) That's not what she said, the lady said the following: What we have agreed on ... (*József Antall: Unambiguous...*)

**Zsuzsa Szelényi:** Literally it says... (*Some words are unintelligible.*) that we give up the right of veto in this case and we don't sign the whole thing.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** Yes, let me summarize it. (*József Antall: Do that.*) So the way I see it is that the Opposition Roundtable can sign an agreement today because it is quite clear that nobody has put a veto, for all those who have a right of veto have given it up, and the League does not have a right of veto anyway, so they can only decide whether they will sign it or not.

**József Antall:** The Alliance of Free Democrats has decided not to sign it, FIDESZ has decided not to sign it, but will they attend the plenary session? (*Péter Tölgyessy: They will attend the plenary session.*) And there [they will make] an announcement ... (*Péter Tölgyessy: They want to make a short statement there.*) A short statement ... I propose that our five organizations should also make a statement. (*Károly Vigh: Yes, definitely.*) The Social Democratic Party will decide, then ...

**István Gaskó:** It will decide. It still depends on the intermediate-level talks.

**József Antall:** Yes, naturally, then they will make a decision.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The Social Democratic Party will make a decision in time, I'm sure about that.

**József Antall:** We are also sure. And then we have the League. In their case it's just that they will be the same as the other two organizations. Because then ...

**Zsolt Zétényi:** Will those opposing the agreement issue a joint communiqué? Or separate ones?

**Péter Tölgyessy:** As I know it ... I have been negotiating all day, so I can hardly tell exactly. As far as I know, the Alliance of Free Democrats will make a statement and FIDESZ ... (*László Kónya: will join it.*) will make a comment or a statement. If I'm not mistaken. But maybe I am.

**József Antall:** I will then propose to our organizations that we should finish it soon because we don't have much to discuss now.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** There are quite a few points still.

**József Antall:** Let's go through those, but we will then make a separate statement. And then ... I would like to ask a question, for, you know, the whole ... If I may ask, are we, the organizations which have made this decision, to interpret it to mean that the future operation of the Opposition Roundtable – which covers all those questions pending, including the press law and all the rest broken off, as well as the supervision of the economic committees, since the Opposition Roundtable, as it were, is the joint body of all of the opposition working in the political and economic committees – will be maintained, or they want to stop the operation of the Opposition Roundtable by this move.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** There is a very simple answer to it: We have not put a veto so that the Opposition Roundtable could continue to function. We have found that this solution can ensure that the Opposition Roundtable [...] further ...

**József Antall:** So then the Opposition ... I'm saying it because we are all fully aware of the fact – we are not blossoming virgins – so it is obvious that there is a political fight emerging here between us to some extent, the intensity and tone of which, based on the fundamental statements we all make, will naturally be determined by the sort of attack we will undergo.

[...]

**Imre Mécs:** I want to make one comment. This polarization started on August 19, with the announcement of the national center, and in effect what happened was nothing but the extension of this polarization. We want to go on with the work.

**György Szabad:** Let me make another comment with respect to this, namely, that several personalities of the Opposition Roundtable – including for instance me – and MDF too officially announced that they will not make any coalition agreement until the elections. So this apparent polarity is not well-founded.

[...]

**József Antall:** ... Our wording – if you read it carefully – refers to ... (*He reads out.*) “If the president of the republic is elected before the parliamentary elections, in the course of the political transition, then the voters, based on general and equal right of vote, will elect the president by secret and direct vote for a term of four years.” So we do not stipulate that there should be direct elections, for on the basis of Act I of 1946, the constitution and its historical continuity will be restored. It will be passed, and according to our view we will only append a concluding provision to it saying that in case after the present Parliament has passed the modification of the constitution it maintains its position to elect the president of the republic before the first session of the new Parliament, it can not do it in any other way but by direct elections for we do not have confidence in this Parliament, we do not feel it is creditable, and in this case only the direct election is justified...

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** That's clear. I apologize for the interruption, it's half past four now. I would like to ask again in a very clear way that MSZMP has proposed to hold the presidential elections on November 25. To this ...

**József Antall:** Yes, we regard it as a political issue which should not be [...] in the modification of the constitution, this should [be included] in the concluding provision, the Parliament can decide on it later ... (*Péter Tölgyessy: So this should not be part of the agreement.*) No. We think it is much more important to link the parliamentary elections to the, so we have to obligate them to – if you are kind enough to read all the way through – we should not have a situation that the president is elected, and then they do not call the parliamentary elections. So in accordance with the constitution it has to be [done] together with the election of the president, after its election, since the constitution says the president is entitled to call the parliamentary elections, and since the interim president does not have a right to do so, who ...

[...]



**Péter Tölgyessy:** Yes. Then we can bring this issue to an end, it has been solved, so the Opposition Roundtable will have two spokesmen in the case of the president – for it is a disputed issue. One spokesman for those who cannot sign the agreement on this issue, and one for those who can sign it; and those who can sign it will make a statement as to what they have to say to the proposal of MSZMP signed with an accurate date.



Document 83.  
Meeting of the Medium-level Political Coordinating Committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 18, 1989.*



**Meeting of the medium-level political conciliation committee  
of the National Roundtable Negotiations**

September 18, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay: Honoured Participants!**

At our last session the sides had several questions for the delegation of the MSZMP and they are expecting statements and answers to them. I wanted to speak so that I could present the position of the MSZMP concerning those issues. No matter how the agenda will reflect these issues in the form of preparing legislation or discussing other topics, I would like to summarise our answers now.

The first question concerned the value of the assets the MSZMP would hand over to the government and the time of handing them over. The answer to this question is that independently from the passing of the party law, already in the period prior to enacting it, the MSZMP will gradually hand over assets worth 2 billion HUF to the government by the end of this year.

The second question was whether the government would finance the parties from the assets handed over – the government's answer is „yes”.

A further question was whether the 50 million forints administered by the government had been deducted from the subvention the MSZMP receives from state budget. The government's answer is „yes”, the government would indeed devote the part cut from the party's central budget subvention to providing support to other parties.

There was a question addressed to the Council of Ministers – a statement is expected from them to clarify whether they are willing to act in accordance with the modified law of criminal procedure when it is accepted but has not entered into force. Maintaining our position outlined last time, our answer is that the Council of Ministers regard entering into force as a technicality, and it will do everything it can to make sure that Parliament forecasts an effective date, which is the most reasonable and optimal solution from a technical – or any other – point of view. And up to the effective date it will also act in the spirit of the modifications.

The government has also made a statement concerning the financial support for candidates during the election campaign, since the delegation of the MSZMP agreed with the other two sides at the last session that the subvention should be HUF 100 million. After consulting with the government I can say now that it takes notice of it, and will mark off that amount in the budget.

I would also like to state now that those preparing draft bills accept the proposal that the members of the Constitutional Court – 15 persons – should be elected in three phases, 5 members in the first phase, 6 members in the second phase, and 4 members in the third phase – in the spirit of the consensus also declared by the negotiating sides on the medium-level.

The government – in its role of preparing laws – accepts that a deputy head of the State Audit Office should be elected who would be commissioned to organize that institution.

In connection with the party law, I would like to state the following. We accept version a) of Article II (2) (2) with the insertion of an additional word. The text would be phrased as follows. „Members of the professional staff of the military and of the police

may not occupy leading positions in national, regional, or county organs of parties and the professional staff of the police in the party organs operating in the administrative unit of their place of service." The word which was added here is „leading" – the Opposition Roundtable should accept this, their position has otherwise been accepted. To put it simply, professionals in the army and the police can not be secretaries in parties in the respective regions.

Among the questions in connection with improving trust – although this issue will be discussed at a later stage – the government would also state its position on the issue of the Workers' Militia.. The essence of that sounds like this: „In accordance with the decision of the Council of Ministers, the Workers' Militia is an armed organization under state regulation, and its function and subordination structure will be defined in the framework of the defence reform. Until then, at the initiative of the MSZMP, the government announces with the intention to improve trust that the number of members of the Workers' Militia will be reduced from 60 000 to 40 000 in 1990. A further measure to improve trust is that the Workers' Militia will restrain from armed training exercises, it will not take part in defending public order and security any longer, and hands over its guns to the Ministry of Defence." Thank you for your attention.

[...]

**József Kajdi:** [...] The first debated issue in connection with the election of the members of the Constitutional Court is the following. The Opposition Roundtable would like to include an incompatibility clause in the draft bill: „A person can not be an elected member of the Constitutional Court if he or she had been a member of the government, or a party employee, or had occupied a leading position in the state organization." Concerning this, the MSZMP's delegation is of the opinion that for the sake of legal security and predictability, every provision should be set up in a way that its possible effects could be foreseen. I do not think we can put people into a situation like that; people, who a couple of years ago did not even dare to think there would be an institution like the Constitutional Court in Hungary ever. To accelerate this meeting and to bring closer the consensus, I would like to suggest a compromise in respect of this. The MSZMP could accept this proposal and it could be included in the basic „norm" text if the first 5 members of the Constitutional Court were elected now, the next five members by the next Parliament, and the remainder – please do not misunderstand me – in 5 years. This way we would provide the opportunity of electing members of the Constitutional Court to three parliaments. We would only apply the proposed conditions to the last five members. I think it would be a fair solution if the condition were not applied in the case of the first ten members.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** [...] The Opposition Roundtable has nothing against coming back to this when we have discussed the text as a whole in a couple of minutes on the medium level. But until then, we would like to see the readiness of the sides for compromise concerning the rest of the issues, and then, depending on that, we could come back later to a possible compromise.

[...]

**József Kajdi:** As far as the election of the office holders of the Constitutional Court is concerned, the Opposition Roundtable and the Third Side can accept a solution where members of the Court would elect their office holders themselves, but the MSZMP prefers a direct election of those office holders by the Parliament when the members are elected.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The Opposition Roundtable insists on letting the elected members of the Constitutional Court choose their own Chairman and Vice Chairman.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** The delegation of the MSZMP does not think that the election of them by the Parliament would be so risky, but we do not think this issue should be an obstacle to consensus, thus, we accept the position of the other two sides.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The Opposition Roundtable takes notice of the statement of the MSZMP concerning the issues in connection with its assets. We will make the ominous statement concerning party activities at the workplace at the full session.

**The Speaker:** Imre Nagy has just suggested that various solutions should stay in the bill as alternative proposals.

**Imre Pozsgay:** I have a proposal in this case. [Since] the Opposition Roundtable insists on making their separate statement on this, the opinion of the Third Side could be included as an alternative proposal, if the Third Side is willing to accept it like this.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** This is acceptable for the Opposition Roundtable, but it concerns the Third Side more than us.

**Imre Nagy:** I have to ask something. We can not understand why we should not represent all the alternatives in the draft bill, together with the details of who supports what in the triangular negotiations. After all, concerning this bill, quite clear-cut alternatives have been voiced in this room by the participating organizations – and in the society as well.

**Imre Pozsgay:** We can not give you an answer.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** We have nothing against it, but the Opposition Roundtable still wants to make a statement concerning this issue, as we have indicated earlier.

[...]

**József Antall:** [...] The MSZMP's proposal that policemen can not take leading positions in parties is accepted by us. During the break there was a question concerning our position because it was not completely clear whether we accepted it or not. So the text should be the following: „Members of the professional staff of the military and of the police may not occupy leading positions in national, regional, or county organs of parties

and the professional staff of the police in the party organs operating in the administrative unit of their place of service." We have accepted it, I just read it out to make sure nothing is misunderstood.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The Opposition Roundtable has acknowledged that the government will act in accordance with, or at least in the spirit of the new law of criminal procedure. We are glad to hear that, but it would still be useful to set the exact effective date of this bill – and it would also be useful to set it as early as possible in accordance with the promises of the MSZMP.

**Imre Pozsgay:** György Szabad has proposed a 120-day deadline, and we can accept it.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** We welcome the proposal.

[...]

**József Antall:** Concerning the Workers' Militia, we take notice of Imre Pozsgay's answer as a position that improves trust. The Opposition Roundtable still thinks, however, that its proposition is sufficiently backed up and maintains it; we would also like to have it attached in its original form to the consensus if there is one. At the same time, since this is not an integral part of the „fundamental” laws at the end of this phase of the negotiations, we regard it as a topic for the next phase, and we maintain our accurately phrased position in respect of the Workers' Militia.

[...]

**András Tóth:** Mr. Speaker, Honoured Participants! The „editing committee” commissioned by the three negotiating sides has examined the draft agreement submitted by the delegation of the MSZMP as a closing document of the phase of the political conciliation talks from 13 June to 18 September, and has approved of it with some textual modifications. These modifications just make the text more precise and accurate so I would like to suggest that we should not read them out one by one, we should not initiate further debate. I believe the proposals of the representatives of the three sides in the „editing committee” were unanimously acceptable, and so the whole draft agreement is deemed ready for signing. Thank you for your attention.

**The Speaker:** I ask the other two sides: do you have anything to add here?

**György Szabad:** We accept it.

**Nándor Bugár:** We accept it.

**The Speaker:** Today's medium-level negotiation is finished. As Speaker, I thank you for your work and suggest that we should go on with the negotiations as a full session.



Document 84.  
Plenary Session of the National Roundtable Negotiations.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 18, 1989.*



## Plenary Session of the National Roundtable Negotiations

September 18, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[...]

**Rezső Nyers**, *president of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party*: Honourable Meeting! Ladies and Gentlemen! As a result of three months' hard work of negotiations, we have reached the end of a phase. We can confirm with our signatures the political consensus concerning the principles and rules serving the purpose of the peaceful transition. This is a common success, proving the constructivity, the intention to agree and the self-containment of the three partners. I think we have made a big step towards a political system in which political will originates from the citizens and it is implemented by institutions built on authentic initiatives of the society. The national building of democracy will be an achievement we have made shoulder to shoulder, with joint efforts.

Since May 1988, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party has been walking the road of reforms without hesitation; it has set the goal of implementing democratic socialism.

We are living in times that change the course of events. At stake is the future of the nation. In order to prevent the deepening of the crisis, it is necessary to change the political model, to establish the constitutional state and the institutions of a modern parliamentary democracy. As far as the attitude of the actors is concerned, this system is built exclusively on patience and mutual understanding. Let us heed Lajos Kossuth's warning: „Do not let us argue over what we have been, let us unite in order to become what we have to become!” [...]

When our negotiating delegation signed the document of the preliminary agreements, our party did not focus on the way of transmitting power, but on the purpose of modifying the way of exercising power. I would like to remind you that it was this party that started to take apart the party-state, and it considered to be its main task to create the constitutional state. We are convinced that the establishment of institutions that can be considered modern in the European context serves political stability, peaceful transition and the new national public consensus as well. [...]

The position of the MSZMP is that now that we have closed the first phase of negotiations, it is time that we present to the Parliament the draft bills that we have managed to agree on. In our opinion the Parliament can by all means fulfil its historic mission during the transition to the constitutional state. [...]

The MSZMP attributes great significance to the institution of the president of the republic. We think that it is a common, national interest that the president should be elected this year. This solution would pacify the public, which is becoming more and more agitated, before the complications of the open-ended parliamentary elections and of a possible coalition government. This solution seems to be reasonable also when considering the tasks of maintaining and improving the international relations of the country.

Within a relatively short period of time, there will be parliamentary elections in Hungary. On behalf of my negotiating delegation, I would like to confirm again: our party is willing to be measured on the occasion of parliamentary elections; only the free expression of the will of the society can lead to the creation of a new

Parliament which can carry out its legislative work being aware of its responsibility for the future of the nation and of the support of the population at the same time.

Irrespective of the results of the elections, the MSZMP is ready to share the responsibility of governing together with other parties. In the present situation it is unavoidable for the political forces to concentrate on delimiting themselves from each other and on defining and making known their own political image. In spite of that, we should be working on emphasising common responsibility and co-operation in the political terrain already in the next few months, selfish party interests notwithstanding.

[...]

**György Szabad:** Honourable Meeting! A few minutes ago we were weighing words, reconciling sentences and were trying to arrange into points everything we could agree in.

If we remember the start of the negotiations of a few months ago, we have to say we have achieved a lot of the goals we set for ourselves then, though not all of them.

The public will soon find out which points we have been able to agree on, which points we could compare our opinions in, and we hope people will understand that we have not negotiated in vain or above their heads.

When we started these negotiations, we said, using a simile, that we do not regard the negotiating table as a gambling table where one wins the same amount as the other loses. We consider this negotiating table to be what we hope to have been able to make it: a table where a basis, the basis for the development of the Hungary of the future is formulated.

[...]

Maybe a lot of people will say that this basis is narrow; we will only reply: „make it wider!” Maybe there will be some who say that the guarantees we could provide for the Hungarian democracy of the future are insufficient; we will tell them to take care of what we have achieved here, to add some more to it, we are going to help them to expand the foundations and enrich the results we have been able to achieve for the Hungarian people.

All we wanted to achieve was that the people become aware of their own strength and can live with it on the occasion of the free elections. We wanted to create the conditions of a peaceful transition, maybe we have not managed to ensure everything as yet, however, we think what we have achieved is enough for the people that have become aware of their own strength to act for their own future within the framework created by law, recognising the meaning of democracy, and through the free expression of opinion and will.

[...]

**Imre Nagy:** Honoured Speaker, Honourable Negotiating Partners and Compatriots! On behalf of the social organizations of the Third Side, I welcome the results achieved by hard work during the negotiations. We announce publicly that we agree with the draft bills elaborated jointly and we urge their presentation to the Parliament.

We are convinced that these draft bills are a good basis for the peaceful transition desired by all and are in accordance with the real values of the great

majority of Hungarian society. We also accept the other agreements that can not be incorporated in provisions. The disputes preceding today's agreement were longer than would have been necessary or desirable, but we all wanted to perform at a high level and do our work thoroughly, which justifies the delay. Compromises took long to make, we had been working on them till the last minute. [...]

Our task has been to elaborate a joint proposal for the period of the transition. We joined hands to work together, to serve and not to decide. Decision is the task and the competence of the legislation, of the Parliament, and – as opposed to several of our negotiating partners – we do not only consider this body to be legitimate but also responsible and autonomous. We can not have a right to decide, because the different organizations sitting at the three tables [*Sic! – trans.*] do not represent the totality of Hungarian society, its valuable diversity and differences. [...]

The organizations participating in the negotiations as the Third Side would find it necessary to elect the president of the republic the soonest possible, by the direct vote of the people.

We have agreed about a modern and good – though we should say honestly: a bit complicated – electoral system and have found a solution for the possibility of the participation in the elections of social organizations that do not wish to operate as parties.

We have agreed on the issues concerning the operation and management of the parties, and if the Parliament accepts our proposal, the necessary institutional guarantees of the Constitutional Court and the office of the president of the republic can be established. We have something to protect, stand up for, and implement together.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Honourable Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen! I would like to make a specific announcement in this ceremonial atmosphere, hoping not to spoil its solemnity. We decided on the medium-level negotiation to discuss an important issue at the full session: that of determining the state of affairs and the public legal circumstances, the problem of who will fulfil the tasks of the head of state until the president of the republic is elected.

Accepting the arguments and the rationality of the proposals of the Opposition Roundtable, the delegation of the MSZMP, although it had held a different position, has arrived at the conclusion that it accepts the proposal of the Opposition Roundtable that the Presidential Council should resign simultaneously with the entering into force of the modifications of the Constitution and that the Speaker of Parliament should act as head of state until the election of the president of the republic.

I had to make this announcement, and I think this is another factor that makes it possible to declare our negotiations to be successful. Thank you for your attention.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** József Antall would like to speak for the Opposition Roundtable.

**József Antall:** I thank Minister Pozsgay for the information. I think it was very important to clarify this matter, because if we had violated the Constitution at the moment of the entering into force of the modification of the Constitution, we would hardly have had a reason to celebrate. And the other solution would have been a violation of the Constitution, therefore we are especially glad that „in this atmosphere”

the MSZMP has evaluated and accepted our position both from public legal and from political points of view. We hope that the implementation will be equally correct and will produce similar opinions. Thank you.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** We can go on to discuss the most important issue and we are rather far from arriving at a complete consensus. The most important issue is, apart from establishing the institution of the president of the republic, the date and the way of the election of the head of state. In this issue the Opposition Roundtable has been unable to form a common position. Four organizations of the ORT hold a different view than the other five. Five of the organizations of the ORT are inclined to accept the idea of the direct vote and of holding the election before the parliamentary elections. Four organizations can not accept this solution, for this reason the ORT adopts the following procedure for the rest of the negotiation: first, five organizations of the ORT will make their statement in this issue, then the organizations of the minority. I now call upon József Antall.

**József Antall:** Honoured Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen! After the announcement made by Péter Tölgyessy I am going to disclose the statement of those five organizations, which have formed their position from the point of view of the whole group of issues and the consensus, on the basis of the whole process of the negotiations and the totality of the results.

The organizations that have accepted the solution to be outlined are the following: Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Society, Independent Smallholders' Party, Christian Democratic People's Party, Hungarian Democratic Forum, Hungarian People's Party. [...]

[...] these five organizations wish to modify the Constitution in the sense that in the new Constitution the form of state of Hungary would be the republic again. It was the Constitution of 1949 that repealed the Hungarian form of state, republic, accepted by the national assembly elected on the first free elections after World War II, in 1945.

[...]

Therefore we believe in this solution, and as part of the global agreement discussed during the negotiations and for the period of transition we accept as an exception that the concluding clause should be worded as follows: „If the President of the Republic is elected before electing the new Parliament, in the period of political transition, citizens should elect the President on the basis of general and equal voting rights, by direct and secret vote and for a period of four years.” That is all we would like to attach to the Constitution as a clause, since the special transitional period makes this differentiation possible and justified at the same time, and this also means – which is obvious from a public legal point of view – that before the assembling of the new Parliament a President of the Republic elected by direct vote should lead the country, however, the president of the republic elected by direct vote will be expectant to embody the institution we have created and left intact, that is, of the institution of the president of the republic which we have been able to recreate between these walls on the basis of the continuity of Hungarian history.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I would like to explain my views on behalf of the Alliance of Free Democrats not only in relation to the institution of the president of the republic but also concerning the whole process of the negotiations.

National reconciliation talks were started so that the governing party and the organizations of the Opposition Roundtable can remove the obstacles from the way of holding free elections and of the peaceful transition to democracy through a consensus. Now that the draft agreement is about to be signed, we must note that we have managed to fulfil only a smaller part of this task.

We can consider a result the draft of the election law, the fact that the proposal for modifying the Constitution recommends to omit most of the expressions describing or symbolising the system of party-state and the fact that the planned modification of the criminal code and that of the law of criminal procedure exclude the persecution of exercising political rights.

These agreements are based partly on principles acknowledged by all partners, for example the one on the proposed modification of the criminal code, and partly on mutual allowances, like the electoral law. However, we have not been able to proceed in some other fundamental issues, because the current leadership of the MSZMP has refused to make any substantial allowances. It does not want to eliminate its units at the workplaces, it has not promised to account for the assets it owns or manages, it would not give up the ownership of county papers, and it does not approve of disbanding the Workers' Militia. The MSZMP, however, insists on establishing the institution of the president of the republic before the free elections, and on electing the president before electing the new Parliament. Under these circumstances we do not see the guarantees for the freedom of the elections or for the equality of chances of the parties.

We also have to count with the MSZMP keeping some power positions outside the Parliament after the elections, which can put into question the power of the people's representational organs.

We will not sign the agreement in its present form, however, we do not wish to incapacitate the other organizations of the Opposition Roundtable, therefore we suspend our right flowing from the Roundtable – as one of the negotiating partners – being allowed to decide only with the agreement of all of its members. In this way we make it possible to sign the agreement for our partner organizations who deem it justified to do so.

According to the proposition of the MSZMP, in the case of disputed issues the government should present to the Parliament the positions of each side. In our opinion, the current Parliament can not make decisions in issues affecting transition in which the governing party and its opposition disagree.

The negotiations have been necessary because this Parliament is not suitable for expressing the will of the people. Our proposition is to hold a referendum on the matters that fundamentally determine the democratic transition. Let the people decide whether they confirm the agreement where there is one, and what should happen in the disputed issues. First of all, let the people decide whether parties should withdraw from the workplaces. That the president of the republic should be elected after free parliamentary elections. Let them decide whether the MSZMP should account for the assets it owns or manages and whether the Workers' Militia should be disbanded.

We invite the other member organizations of the Opposition Roundtable to take part in initiating the referendum. We call upon the MSZMP and the Third Side not to put an obstacle to the referendum.

Now the FIDESZ would like to make its statement.

**László Kövér:** The Federation of Young Democrats sat down to the negotiating table with the supposition that we can take the MSZMP's statement seriously that it would support the establishment of party pluralism, the free, democratic elections and would return to the Hungarian society the rights, which belong to it, not as a gift but as its inherent patrimony.

However, the negotiating delegation of the FIDESZ was disappointed to find that the MSZMP did not consider the equality of opportunity for the citizens and their organizations something to be acknowledged as a matter of fact, but it was continuously trying to make its acknowledgement dependant on the extent to which the Opposition Roundtable proved to be flexible in issues its opposition did not deem to pertain closely to the peaceful transition.

During the negotiations, the attitude of the MSZMP has changed in a negative way, putting its benevolence in doubt in our eyes. In spite of that, being aware of their responsibility to society, the organizations of the Opposition Roundtable – and the FIDESZ among them – kept to the negotiations all along and made a series of compromises. The Opposition Roundtable gave up its original position, and conceded that this Parliament should be allowed to create the institution of the president of the republic, it made significant allowances concerning the institution of the Workers' Militia and the establishment of the Constitutional Court, in return for which it asked for similar allowances. However, it has not been able to achieve that the president of the republic should be elected after the parliamentary elections, that the MSZMP would agree to disband the Workers' Militia immediately and without a legal successor, that the numerous hand guns in the possession of the members of certain groups of society should be withdrawn, that the MSZMP should leave the workplaces or that the MSZMP should account to society for its assets acquired in the past four decades. The FIDESZ considers all these matters to be fundamental for a peaceful transition, for the creation of equal political opportunities, and to be able to affect the stability of the basis of the future Hungarian democracy in the long run.

We consider the solutions to these matters included in the agreement to be insufficient, and we can not support them, therefore the FIDESZ joins the statement made on behalf of the SZDSZ.

[...]

**György Szabad:** I would like to react briefly to what has been said. We have not resigned any point of our declaration of intentions of June 21; and our opinion concerning the draft agreement viewed differently by the different organizations of the Opposition Roundtable is essentially the same [as that of the others]. We regard it to be a partial result, and the only difference is that some organizations of the Opposition Roundtable regard it as a partial result they can build on to reach the rest [of the goals]. We ask the public to consider our disagreement to lie not with the goal of the democratization of Hungary, but with the way that it should be achieved, and we hope to meet with our other two negotiating partners on the road to establishing



representational democracy, having all of the organizations of the Opposition Roundtable hitched on to us. Thank you.

[...]

**Péter Tölgyessy:** I do not believe it would be useful to go on with the internal dispute of the Opposition Roundtable at the full session, however, I have to remark that the Alliance of the Free Democrats could not sign the agreement, because in its view, the five organizations that signed had diverged from the declaration of intentions. I had to make that clear so that the last word should not be the one denying it. I would like to stress that the internal disputes of the Opposition Roundtable should not be brought to this negotiation.

**József Antall:** Honourable Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen! We, the organizations of the ORT, all agree that we do not want to argue here. It is apparent that due to the differences of opinions and the differences of judgement, there will be correct and incorrect statements made outside these walls – let them happen then and there.

The other question I would like to touch on is that the five organizations and parties that hold a more positive view concerning the agreement consider it to be a basis that can be built on. It is a basis because it is an agreement, and one can only expect the other side to fulfil an obligation if there is an agreement about it, and we thought we would agree with you on what is honest and we would call you to account for it. Therefore we did not wish to endanger all the things we have agreed in and which form part of the emerging modern, European Hungary: the modern, European Constitution; the modern, European voting rights; and a modern, European system of parties. Considering the external, internal and economic conditions of Hungary, we are convinced that our opposition partners who are of a different opinion also think so, but on the basis of some other criteria.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** Honourable Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen! The negotiating delegation of the MSZMP also does not wish to intervene in the dispute that started within the Opposition Roundtable concerning some, but primarily one main issue. We would like to react only to the proposition made, in accordance with our attitude during the whole of the negotiations. I can not, however, let go unnoticed the remarks that underrate the results achieved here, at the negotiating table. [...]

I would also like to say that the negotiating delegation of the MSZMP is primarily anxious for the dignity of the negotiations. It has never accepted the tone used earlier in relation to certain issues and now in relation to this issue by the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Federation of Young Democrats. We do not think anyone should be sitting at the negotiating table to make judgements. [...]

We have been really shocked by the fact – and please do not think we are splitting hairs – that fundamental and crucial proposals like evaluating every law or most of the laws by referendum should be mentioned only here, whereas they could have been included in the agenda of the first days of the negotiations. We would have been glad to find out about these propositions and none of us would have refused to discuss them.

Who has been deceived? Obviously the people who – through [the opposition] having attained publicity with various tricks – were forced to attend to these negotiations and have managed to infer [with the help of] this publicity that the situation is chaotic at best. I think we must not overlook this point of view either.

Another thing, which shocked me even more is my fear that the problem is not related to the people's sovereignty. I am afraid – and please try to convince me that my fear is not justified during the next round of negotiations – that the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Federation of Free Democrats do not believe in the new Parliament to be elected freely, because if they accepted its sovereignty, [they would know that] the appropriate will can be easily expressed and codified again if a problematic situation emerges at the negotiating table. I would have liked to say this, because I do not think we should set out for the period of transition with such scepticism and reservation, and showing such contempt for the people. We are not asking questions about the conclusions that led our negotiating partners to these conclusions; in the case of the specific proposal we have approached the goals; we were ready to weigh the compromise proposals – in spite of our original positions having been different –, because we consider peaceful transition to be important, and that is why we accept the position of the five organizations. I would like to repeat: although it is far from the original intentions and position of the MSZMP, in the spirit of the peaceful transition, we accept the compromise proposal, being ready not to judge but to be measured. Thank you, that was all I wanted to say.

**Péter Tölgyessy:** The Alliance of Free Democrats sat down to the negotiating table with the intention to reach an agreement that can help us to do everything we can in order that there could be free elections in this country. We are, however, not in a position to sign any agreement including measures that would come before the competence of the Parliament to be elected freely by the people.

The truth is that we had been hoping until the last moment that there would be no significant decisions made at this negotiating table that precede the Parliament authorized by free elections, that is why we made significant allowances in a number of questions.

[...]

I would like to stress that we do not underrate the results, that is why we did not interpose our veto, but approved of our partner organizations signing the agreement. We do appreciate the results of the negotiations, however, we wish to put it on record that we can not sign an agreement which does not include the withdrawal of the governing party from the workplaces, the elimination of the power of the party-state reaching to the level of the workplaces, an agreement which does not include the disbanding of the Workers' Militia without a legal successor, while containing the establishment of the institution of the head of state.

We decided not to bear responsibility for the fact that Hungarian history is not proceeding in a democratic direction, towards a democratic transition, but maybe towards a presidential system.

[...]

**László Kövér:** I believe and I hope that the dispute concerning these issues will go on for long on public forums. I would not like to enter into this argument now on behalf of my organization, however, on the part of the Federation of Young Democrats I

reject Imre Pozsgay's remark describing the position of the Federation of Young Democrats flowing from its political conception, as contempt for the people.

[...]

**József Antall:** We would not like to argue because it would be an argument without an end. Péter Tölgyessy made a remark concerning the issue of presidential power; I am convinced that he knows best that the institution of the president included in the modification of the Constitution prepared jointly, is outright impossible. That is all I wished to say, let history and the Hungarian people say the final word; we are aware of our responsibility, they are also aware of their responsibility, we can go on with our work.

[...]



Document 85.  
Meeting of the MSZMP Political Executive Committee.  
Verbatim Record of Minutes (Excerpts).  
*September 19, 1989.*



## Meeting of the MSZMP Political Executive Committee

September 19, 1989

(Verbatim Record of Minutes. Excerpts.)

[Subject:] **Report on the political reconciliatory negotiations**

**Imre Pozsgay:** Dear Comrades! Resuming the report I started last time, as you could see in the live coverage of the television yesterday and in the papers today, one phase of the political negotiations came to an end yesterday whose main goal was to make preparations for establishing the necessary legal conditions for a peaceful transition and for the fundamental laws to be submitted to the Parliament by the government. Despite all the tension and political adversities, and that's what I want to start with, I have to say that we have accomplished the task set by the CC of MSZMP for the negotiating delegation, namely that now we can submit the bills based on a political agreement, on an agreements in which we, in view of the position of MSZMP and its political responsibility, naturally had to make some concessions, but these concessions were largely based on a compromise and in our view they did not go in their content beyond what we can endorse anyway in accordance with our political conviction. Thus the negotiations brought results which we can evaluate as successful from the point of view of MSZMP and its main goals as well as from the aspect of legislation, as far as this phase is concerned.

As the comrades can see it in the published documents, the agreement covers six bills, and we also agreed to conduct political exchange of ideas in certain issues which can strengthen confidence on all sides, but for us the most important thing was to make some progress in this. Form the point of view of codification and legislation I also want to mention the fact that now that we have the agreement the government can discuss the bills as documents of political agreements at its Thursday meeting and submit them to the Parliament. The agreement in its present form says, maintaining the still disputed issues, that the negotiations did not paralyze the Parliament in its ability to function or in its self-identity, though there were some worries and fears in this respect, made explicit even recently.

In order to make these result convincing and applicable in legislation we need to have a meeting with a team of MSZMP, the MSZMP representatives of the Parliament, we plan to have this meeting at two in the afternoon on Friday, as far as I know, the invitation has already been sent out, where we can inform them about the whole situation, the timetable of the negotiations, and we can also reconcile the political demands. I want to say in advance that should the representatives not accept the agreements, that would not mean the defeat of the negotiations but rather the defeat of MSZMP, for all through the negotiations it has intended to meet the responsibility of trying to enforce its influence on the Parliament with a view to getting these bills across.

As far as the concrete agreements of yesterday's meeting are concerned, let me tell you briefly about them too. One question left open is the issue of party organizations at the workplace, that is, we have not been able to come to an agreement on it but the negotiating parties gave their consent, except for SZDSZ and FIDESZ, that the government should submit this bill, this passage of the party bill, without an agreement on it to the Parliament. As for the financing of the parties: beyond an agreement in principle the delegation of MSZMP announced that that it would turn over to the government a party property worth of about 2 billion forints already in this transitional period in order that the government can meet, among other things, the demands of the parties for the necessary infrastructure.

An agreement has been made concerning the organization of parties within the armed forces. The only deviation from the position described before was that some sociological survey had been made which showed that policemen did not fulfill a party secretary position in any part of the country, so we made the concession that policemen should not fulfill such a function in the place of duty. So this way we managed to settle this point of the agreement too, that is, employees of the Hungarian People's Army and the Hungarian Police cannot be elected to fulfill party positions at the county, regional or national level, and furthermore policemen are limited in the sense that they cannot fulfill any leading party duty at the place of service, say the district policeman should not be the party secretary at the place where he is in service.

This is what was left open for yesterday as far as the party bill is concerned, so concerning the party properties the agreement of principle is that two billion were offered, concerning the party organizations at the workplace MSZMP maintained its position and insisted that the law could not ban the parties at companies and institutions, likewise concerning the issues of party organizations within the armed forces, so this was the way in which the questions pending were resolved concerning the party bill.

As regards the modification of the constitution we came to an agreement on setting up the Constitutional Court, and there is a separate law on the Constitutional Court which is attached to the modification of the constitution, accepting the principle that the Court will have 15 members, the seats will be filled in three phases, this Parliament will elect five judges, the new one six, and the remaining four will be elected sometime at the beginning of 1993 when consolidation has been completed. The compromise here involved the agreement, which we had made earlier, that the judges would be elected by the parliament, while its officials by the judges themselves from the members of the Court. The Parliament will set up the Public Board of Audit already in the first phase, it will elect one chairman and one deputy chairman, and the organization of the institution will be carried out by the chairman, while the officials of the Board will be elected by the new Parliament. These were the less difficult questions in which there were no obstacles of any principle in the way of an agreement.

As for the institution of the president I will have to give you a short but more detailed explanation, for we have to avoid any possible misunderstanding, there was some strange legal bargaining going on in this case, but the essence is that the institution was accepted, and five participants of the Opposition Roundtable also agreed that the president should be elected in an advanced election process by way of general, secret and direct balloting, these five organizations are the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Smallholder's Party, the People's Party, the Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and the Christian Democratic Party. The agreement was categorically rejected by the Alliance of Free Democrats and FIDESZ, and with some reservation it was accepted by the Social Democratic Party, as indicated by the fact that they also signed the document. The reservations concerns the time of the presidential elections, but they did endorse the institution itself in its suggested form. Then there is no obstacle in submitting the bill to modify the constitution to the Parliament, based on the signed agreement and the political consensus.

The text of the constitution will not include the election of the president by referendum. In the spirit of our earlier agreement it will say that the president is elected by the parliament for a term of four years. Then there will be a clause attached to it, to be approved by the Parliament, saying that – and this is where the conflict arose within the opposition – in case the president is elected before the new Parliament convenes, then the formula mentioned before comes into effect, the election by referendum, the reason, by the way, why this can be enforced is that the 1946/1 law states that from the moment the new



constitution, the new modifications of the constitution become effective, the Presidential Council ceases to exist, the functions of the head of state are fulfilled, with certain restrictions, by the Speaker of the house, even later, by the way, when the president is already in office. It will be fulfilled by the Speaker of the house, but it can not last longer than sixty days.

So if ... let me give you an example. If the modification of the constitution is passed in the Parliament on October 10, then it will become effective right away, the Presidential Council will be dissolved at that moment, because the modified constitution declares a republican constitutional form. The Presidential Council is dissolved, the Speaker of the house will immediately takes over its functions, and this can last for maximum sixty days according to the constitution. So some part of the opposition recognized the trap here, that's why they rejected the agreement, that the presidential elections will have to be held by all means before the end of November in Hungary. So this is the essence of the agreement. I'm sorry for having gone into such details, but I'm not sure it will be clear and understandable for the public, that's what we have behind this agreement, that is its content.

As for the future fate of the negotiations, a kind of legal, political foundation has been accomplished. We are not overly interested in continuing the negotiations with the same intensity and publicity. We can relax a little bit, especially because we can say we are more engaged now in issues related to the Parliament and also in our upcoming congress, for the questions pending are the following.

The issue of publicity, within it the situation and the matter of the party newspapers, obviously related to the question of the party properties, making use of the party properties in the future and the legal measures related to it. We believe that we should not urge these issues in this phase of the negotiations, let's leave them to the new Parliament, if it decides to deal with them, hopefully we will have enough influence there. Their request was that until the new Parliaments was convened, MSZMP should show restraint and stop investing its properties and making money out of it, we did not agree to it, and the third big question that is used for propagandistic purposes is the issue of the Workers' Militia. This was negotiated among the issues mean to strengthen confidence. But yesterday we stated in a declaration on behalf of the government that it was no longer the army of the party, it was at the disposal of the government, and it would be joined to the army, and that its number was going to be decreased from sixty thousand to forty thousand. That was what we could announce at the moment, but there is nothing to urge us to negotiate in the future in this matter. At the same time, and I think we should not change it, we committed ourselves to continuing the negotiations.

What we can still trust in, after the incident yesterday which tested how far each party could go and in which two organizations, SZDSZ and FIDESZ stayed away from the agreement, is that it might easily happen that the Opposition roundtable collapses, and then we will have a different negotiating situation. So thank you very much, that's what I wanted to say, linking it up with my earlier report that I did not want to repeat.

**Rezső Nyers:** Who has a question to ask?

**Ilona Tatai:** I would. It was said yesterday by the Opposition Roundtable that the general elections should be called 90 day after the election of the president. What sort of agreement was made concerning the time of the general elections?

**Imre Pozsgay:** Yes, we accepted it, it was also in the draft of the agreement, we agreed

that we would propose to the Parliament that it should announce, simultaneously with announcing the date of the presidential elections when the general elections would be held.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, comrade Hámori.

**Csaba Hámori:** It is not clear to me what sort of an office of the president we want for the future as a lasting solution? So it would not be included in the new constitution either that the president is elected by referendum? Because then it is not compatible with our earlier position.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, please.

**Imre Pozsgay:** We have always had here, I do not deny it, a kind of ulterior motive, or rather a consideration, let me put it this way. The thing is that we should make use of the present political advantages of the presidential elections. If we can benefit from it politically, then it might happen, and we hope it will, that we will have enough influence in the new Parliament that the future fate of this issue will be settled by this new parliament, for even if we don't have enough influence, it is this new Parliament which will decide on the issue because it will declare itself sovereign and it will decide in accordance with the opinion of the majority. So what is important for us is that we should have a majority in this Parliament, at least relative majority, so that we can act properly, and in this case the new Parliament may as well make a decision that the referendum version will be kept in the new constitution too. If we don't have enough influence, then it's all the same what results we have achieved in these negotiations.

**Rezső Nyers:** That's clear. Comrade Vastagh.

**Pál Vastagh:** I would like to, it's not really a question, perhaps just an idea, these days there are many political programs, meetings, conferences for deputies, and public opinion in the party is in a state of flurry, I just wonder if we have any idea how we could, how we should present the conclusion of the negotiations in our propaganda, what sort of things should be emphasized, and how we could make the most of it in the eyes of the public and the party members.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, please.

**Imre Pozsgay:** We should do it, all the more so because I believe that especially FIDESZ and SZDSZ will make a hell of a noise after yesterday's events, engaging in strong propaganda, personalities and whatever else they can do. I didn't want to offer myself, but I think our own paper, *Népszabadság* and others may have some plans to do so. I myself would be willing to give a short summarizing interview, if *Népszabadság* devoted a column to it, and then publish a more extensive explanation covering the agreements. Regardless of whether we will go on with the issue of publicity at the talks, we do have a plan to do something in it, for we should start some campaign to get back into the media. I have just looked at the journal *168 óra* (168 Hours), which is published, I think, is heavily subsidized by the state, and it only favors opposition personalities all over the place on every page. So what I have in mind is not banning, but rather a kind of campaign to restore our position after the conclusion of the negotiations.

**Rezső Nyers:** restore in what sense?

**Imre Pozsgay:** Well, in a way that we should increase our coverage, appearance, activity in the press, the radio and television.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, who has a ...? Comrade Gyuricza.

**László Gyuricza:** I have taken a look at this agreement, and I would like to ask a question concerning the second point in the first section, and also the second one, which declares that the peaceful transition covers the period from starting the negotiations to the statutory session of the freely elected new Parliament. What was the reason for declaring it in this particular format, what does it actually cover? The second one says that the participants of the conciliatory talks should enjoy political and personal invulnerability for their activities in the negotiations. What justified the inclusion of this under the present circumstances?

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, please.

**Imre Pozsgay:** The first question. There are two important reasons for including this passage, and here we saw some willingness to cooperate on the part of some participants of the opposition Roundtable. For this was the only sense in which we could accept the principle that we are going to submit the bills listed in point 1 on the first page globally. The original idea of the Opposition Roundtable was a kind of selective procedure, which for them, for instance they did not want [to submit] the modification of the constitution, the institution of the president. They did not, one moment, the party law but only that bit which meant a guarantee for them and not a guarantee for peace, that's the kind of legislative procedure they wanted.

No then, as a response to it we declared, the basic agreement makes reference to it and we made it clear later in the course of the negotiations, that MSZMP and its government was willing to submit the bills only if all the five bills were submitted as a package, because only this would ensure real guarantees, and for the transition, and then they insisted that we should state how long the transition would extend, and in what respect, this is one thing. The other: our argument for the transitional period was that we needed the presidential institution because it would play a stabilizing role. If we define the transitional period longer, then in that case they postpone the codification of the presidential institution to the period after the election of the new Parliament. So these were the two basic arguments. I can see that comrade Gyuricza is nodding his head, it is not convincing for hi,.

**László Gyuricza:** It is not convincing because I have a problem with concluding the period of peaceful transition. What will happen after this period? (*Interruption: Unrest.*)  
But ...

**Imre Pozsgay:** Parliamentary fight.

[...]

**Imre Pozsgay:** In the case of the trilateral conciliatory talks the thing is simply, the negotiating partners insisted on it, that [...] for according to the criminal code and the law of criminal procedure in force at present they could have been arrested every night by

charges of agitation against the state, instigation or on some other ground. Well, I have to apologize for talking a bit vulgarly but they wanted political guarantees that the criminal code would not be applied to them until the negotiations were in progress. By the way it was (*Interruption: it's unacceptable.*) a major issue all along, that's what is included practically in the basic agreement.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, who has any more questions? No more? Any comments? Comrade Grósz.

**Károly Grósz:** One thing is, well, I propose we should approve of the agreement, but I think it is absolutely important that we start explaining it in many different aspects because there is a lot of room for misunderstanding. I have to comments altogether, one concerns what comrade Gyuricza brought up but from a different angle. We have never discussed the peaceful transition theoretically, neither in a political sense as to who means what by it, everybody has freedom in interpreting it. I don't believe that the period of peaceful transition will last only until the new Parliament is set up. In my reading peaceful transition always lasts until a new political model is establishes which I think requires a long period of many years, I don't know how many, ten years or less, but many years which is inevitable related to the changes to be made in economic foundations. But this is a theoretical and political issue. I think there is no guarantee to it that it will always take place in a peaceful period. The bills to be passed and the institutions to be established now do not in themselves offer any guarantee, and just to clear up any misunderstanding, it is not armed fight that I consider to be the alternative of peaceful transition, there are a few other phases in between in my view.

But that's not what is the most important thing, what I wanted to say is that if peaceful transition lasts until the election of the new Parliament, if this is the right interpretation, then the point in our agreement as to which we will turn over properties worth 2 billion forints cannot be done, that's not what we talked about yesterday. Yesterday we talked about turning over 2 billion and a few hundred million, two, three or four, I don't know, we will see how much it will amount to, that's what we will turn over, but of this amount only 1.1 or 1.2 could be turned over by the end of the year or the beginning of next year. So we cannot meet our promise to turn over the whole sum of 2.1 or 2.3 billion. If we turn over the whole amount, what will happen is that we completely wipe out the financial condition for the operation of a political party, it will be a crippled party. You have to see it very clearly, this party will be unable to operate financially.

The other thing is, I don't consider it, comrade Pozsgay said in his introduction, in his introduction that MSZMP, if MSZMP cannot have it accepted by the Parliament, then it will mean some sort of a defeat for MSZMP. I don't regard it as the defeat of MSZMP, though I believe we have to do our best to get the Parliament to accept it. But we still have to reckon with the fact that party members who do not represent the position of MSZMP already have quite a lot of power in the Parliament. So the relations of power and influence are very different now from what we had a year or two ago, when the party members accepted the position of the party without reservations, or they could be convinced by a bit of criticism. I feel some danger here at one point, namely, that as for more recent information the representatives seem to be reluctant to accept and endorse the February date for the elections. So there is quite a bit of aversion in the representatives against having the parliamentary elections three months after the presidential elections, they envisage the general elections no earlier than in the spring or early summer. Now, we will have to persuade them to accept our position on Friday, for we do not usually oblige them

to do something, and by our resolution we shouldn't, only the Central Committee can do that. So we will have to argue for it on Friday, but we have to be ready to see that some of the party member representatives will not accept this proposal. Thank you very much.

**Rezső Nyers:** Any more comments? Miklós Németh.

**Miklós Németh:** I have not heard the introductory talk and the discussion, so I apologize if I say something that, I just want to say a few thoughts relating to what I have heard here. So I think it's a pseudo-argument, and we should not spend too much time and attention on it, how to interpret peaceful transition, for it surely will have several different phases. The first phase is obviously the one in which by means of the fundamental laws that we agreed on we should establish constitutional guarantees for really democratic and free elections. This is the first phase. I do not believe either that we won't have anything to do afterwards, and that we should not continue to negotiate. It will be part of the peaceful transition, it is our common responsibility, for we might easily end up having this country in a situation, as a result of foreign and domestic factors, in which the whole thing is simply eliminated. We should not allow it to happen, to allow such a situation to arise.

I think that the agreements are good, even with these objections and reservations, they can be accepted. And we do have a basis for submitting some other bills necessary for economic codification and getting international support in our governmental work in the remaining time, after these bills are passed. We cannot get all of them through, but we have to select and set up an order of preferences, for the number of bills that are all important amounts to some thirty-five in order to establish a situation which is protected by constitutional guarantees, not only for the political system of institution but also for the economic sphere. This is just plain impossible. Neither the preparatory team nor the government can take this much, not even the Parliament. But the most important ones that are absolutely necessary should perhaps be prepared and submitted in the remaining time.

It has been said here, so I don't know how it was put, that it will be the defeat of MSZMP if it, if the Parliament does not pass the bills. I do trust that they will be accepted, we can have them accepted. MSZMP was sure to be defeated if it repudiated or fundamentally altered it by new item, for its otherwise bad position would be negatively influenced by such a move (*Rezső Nyers: It would lose its credibility.*) Yes, its credibility. As for slander, let's talk about it a bit in clear terms. Even among ourselves we evaluate differently the elections in Zalaegerszeg or Zala county. By this I mean the presidency. So the way I see it is that we are in a very bad position now, and if we add to it, we or the Parliament, or our party with its congress adds a few more things to it, then we 'd better not run in these elections, for we are sure to face a devastating defeat, that's what we should expect. It is not the first time that I say this, our goal is not, it's the party members that are important, the question is where to draw the line for a center, how we can establish a center, it is extremely important for us that this party should be renewed at the congress. But I cannot stress it enough that we should be careful, for it's the society which will decide where to draw the line and how to vote. And there are very bad omens for drawing the line, for voting. They paint a very unfavorable picture.

Now, as for the party properties. We have very little time and there are many unexplored problems, a lot to do. But we can already see that what we have done so far is not accurate. I have a survey here made by the ministry of finance, covering the period only after 1978. So if we go back further and take issues pertaining to the right of property – what is registered and what is not -, and how it was transferred, well, I don't add the property of KISZ and DEMISZ from 1979. That adds a few more billions to it. From 1979

it was an investment financed by direct budgetary sources, we have a list of this year by year. This column shows the liabilities of the party. And the subsidies, the direct budgetary subsidies for MSZMP, they amounted to over ten billion. So what (*Rezső Nyers: plus the investment.*) This includes the investment. (*Nyers: the two together.*) But this is only 1979. (*Interruption: 79.*) This is ten billion forints. (*Interruption: how does the printing press look separately? On its own.*) I will tell you about the printing press because it is important, I will show you. (*Grósz: It is included there, it's on the list.*) Now then this was a first survey, a fast one, we will have to continue it, so I think in what has to be transferred, we have to settle the rights of ownership by settling accounts in a fair way, we can do it by agreeing with the, the opposition and everybody else on some minimal conditions, what is that we can turn over legally, what we have to transfer by the law, to health care, to education or for the purpose of establishing the infrastructure for the parties, but it is obvious now that just by turning over a few things we cannot register the rest of the party properties legally, that just won't work. It won't work for two reasons, one is that until we have the new law on land, we cannot do anything like that, and second, if we still decide to do it, just think it over what the new Parliament will look like in which we perhaps do not have majority after the elections. The first thing it will do is to nullify the whole thing, to restore "order", in its own fashion, so I use the word "order" in inverted commas. So what we have already turned over include things for teachers, high schools, higher education, health care, social institutions, we have to take an accurate inventory of all these things, we have to examine what their value in the books is, and the rest, whether it is two billion, or it will go beyond that to two or three, or even more, that I don't know now. The rest then should be used to build out the infrastructure very soon.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, please, comrade Pozsgay.

**Imre Pozsgay:** I had a chance to clarify my position in part when answering the questions. I also say that the definition of transition is only important from the point of view of codification. Of course, political life is not the same as life in the Parliament, and the life of the society is the same as the maneuvers in the Parliament. Now as to who will vote how in the Parliament I don't know. Of course I don't, I'm just saying, and I'm deeply convinced about it, that if we cannot get these agreements through the parliament, then it will be a total defeat for MSZMP.

For we have to go back to the same starting point, we've done it several times, but it seems we have to do it again. I myself, contrary to my own conviction, had to represent a position of the party at these negotiations, and I was acting accordingly all through the talks, but the starting point for the agreement was that MSZMP recognized that it was in power, and the various alternative organizations would negotiate with it. It was a self-assured position at that time, but this self-assurance evaporated very quickly in this issue. For we could have chosen a method, and risk the status of the government, not that of MSZMP, we could have had the government negotiate with the different organizations. I don't want to go back to these issues, but I definitely want to make it clear that this situation was not brought about by the negotiating delegations, that it was MSZMP which, by virtue of its power and political influence, took the responsibility to agree and try to pull these things through the Parliament. That is the basic question, and naturally I take responsibility for it, either on Friday or at the parliament, whatever discussion brings it up, since I took part in the negotiations being aware of all this, but it would be too much of a burden on me if I had to take all this, represent it on my own. I request the Political Executive Committee to agree to it. (*Well, right, well.*) Well, I'm just saying it because it

has been raised here whether it is indeed a defeat for us or not if we cannot pull these through. We have to convince the Parliament, I think this is the right thing to do, but convincing them will have to be our common responsibility.

As for the resistance and the interests of the Parliament, it has contrary interests in a number of things concerning the agreements. It is not in its interest to give up the electoral districts. It is not in its interest to agree to the limitation of the time course of its mandate, since its prestige would require that it should stay in power until its mandate is valid, and so on and so forth. So the real question is whether MSZMP can exert any influence on the Parliament or not so that it should show good political judgment. I think this is the real issue at stake, otherwise I accept the comments, and we should continue our work accordingly. Thank you very much.

**Rezső Nyers:** Well, dear comrades, before I make a proposal for our position, I want to tell you my opinion that MSZMP has taken a lot of risk by engaging in this series of negotiations and coming to an agreement, it sat down to the negotiating table with an opposition which had previously questioned the legitimacy of the system, the legitimacy of MSZMP, it questioned virtually everything. We have to evaluate the results in this relation. As the negotiations were underway, our political position did not get stronger, it was not even maintained, but we lost quite a lot in the course of the talks. Not because we sat down to negotiate, for it would have happened anyway. In this light I think the result we have achieved are very promising. I don't want to use the word "successful", for success we just have not had, but these are favorable results for MSZMP and for the whole country. So in my view we have every reason to accept it and have it accepted.

The game is not over yet, something happened yesterday, a healthy pluralization took place in the opposition. I consider this to be promising from the point of view of our political future, in one particular situation MSZMP would surely be defeated in the elections, it's not really the numbers that are important, but the loss of prestige. That would happen if a unified opposition ran against us, if the opposition could develop a sense of solidarity. It is still dangerous a little bit that the opposition might form a kind of a coalition in the second round. Now in this light I think it is quite fortunate that some forces of the opposition representing real policy and those who want confrontation became separated openly. I hope that József Antall's forecast or wish, I don't know how to call it for neither of them was convincing, will not come true, namely, that the unity of the opposition will be restored. But this is not, it also depends on the policy we are making, our policy building alliances.

By the statement made by SZDSZ it became obvious to me at the closing session that it was an organization that wanted confrontation, but ... it's also a collector party, SZDSZ, but the faction in it which wishes confrontation rules over the rest and want to attack us by the following. The politically most serious argument is that we want save a system based on authority in a concealed fashion. That's what they will be harping on all the time. The second thing they are going to get at us with is the issue of the party properties, these are financial matters, the third, all the rest, including the issue of the Workers' Militia, the party organizations at the workplace, these are not fundamental political issues but a kind of miscellany. Well, ... the charge that we do not want democracy but maintain a system based on authority in some guise is the most serious one. Well, first of all we should not want to do that. So we should not allow anybody in the party to want such a thing. This question will most likely be raised at the congress, that the office of the president should be used for it.

As for the third issue, the third bunch of questions, well, something will happen.

The weakest, but we can take a firm stand on the issue of democracy, they won't be able to present effective arguments in this, threatening that we want dictatorship. Well, what is really needed is that our congress should bring thorough changes, fundamental renewal and revival, otherwise they will continue to hint at it, making guesses, and can easily confuse the public. But we can gradually improve on our position in this issue.

The most critical issue in my view concerns the party properties. That's because we are divided on this issue. I listen to the opinion of members of the party, read the letters they send, listen to the meetings of deputies everywhere, not to speak of the reform circles, well, some part of our members simply do not believe us, and they confuse the rest, for whom the party property is not an issue. And we don't know either what on earth is going on here exactly, the only thing we can see is that it has not been settled yet, we have tried to make use of the possibility of making good use of our properties in the present legal situation, I think that was all right, it was an acceptable endeavor for a party, it's a different thing that we did it in a somewhat silly way with that lawyer, who might as well be a provocateur, we have lots of them, I have to say, everybody is gambling that MSZMP, well, it's cheap success now. This is, I lived through cases like that when people turned against even themselves, a wide range of people. I don't want to [use] ugly words here, so this is our weak point. We will have to get morally clear before the congress, but how we should do it, I just don't see.

I agree, if I understood comrade Németh well, that the rights of ownership can only be settled properly after the new law on land is passed. And it will only be passed by the new Parliament. So we are facing now a period in which we have to reckon with the fact that we are not going to have any possibility to, it seems to me too that getting the right of use in the way we have been seeking, in a way that we establish some kind of a holding which can then exercise the right of use which we as trustees exercise now legally, which however cannot be transferred.

I wonder if I can explain it well, but why go into such mysteries. My opinion is that we will have to find some solution to this matter by complying with the present legal regulations and rules. And if we have to give some back, then we should do it in full because they will make us do so anyway, and then it's gone to blazes. If we rearrange our things, That's what I have to say, one fundamental precondition of our political renewal, revival or whatever is that we should settle the issue of the party properties in a way that is morally acceptable to our members and the people. If that requires two billion or even more, then be it.

So this is what we have discussed so far. I don't think that the issue of peaceful transition is a problem, the way it was defined in the agreement. Of course we can argue about whether it is the right term to use, it is not precise at all. Well, the way it should be interpreted, I believe, is that as long as there is any relationship between MSZMP and the Opposition Roundtable, it exists. Afterwards it cannot. It will have to cease to exist, perhaps it will much earlier, but this has been a peaceful transition so far, that's how I interpret it, I don't think it's a problem. After all, I say, this is just my opinion, I now propose that we should adopt a resolution that the Political Executive Committee accepts the agreement, approves of it, and it will enforce it in its future activity. That's all we should do, adopt a resolution, I don't think we should have the Central Committee to confirm it, I'm not absolutely clear on this, but I believe the Political Executive Committee is enough, but it obviously has to be made public, I think. To make it clear to everybody.

Now then, I wonder whether we should ask the leaders of the government to enforce it in this spirit ... or what have you, to act in accordance with this resolution. I think we should not do it openly, but among ourselves we perhaps should. And the representatives



who are members of the party should also be called upon to do so internally, and we should work out a plan, for there are a number of things to be done, things we have to do in the party. So somebody should be commissioned to be responsible for it here, one of the party secretaries. And then we would adopt these three resolutions, of which the first one, saying that we approved of it and will act accordingly, should be made public.

[...]

**László Gyuricza:** I want to comment on the issue of the party properties. I even question the use of this term which has been imposed on us, and people who are not very competent in issues related to properties, members of the party and the public, speak some sort of real property, whereas it's just a kind of a quasi-property, a mixed state property, and we should make it very clear everywhere. This would already be some advantage for us.

The second thing that really irritates party members is the structure of this property. For the structure it has is not what is needed for a political party, for its operation, what is really irritating here is the resort places, the rest homes and guest houses, and similar institutions. So what I have in my in the first place when we turn over things to organizations are not things like the printing press, which could be regarded as an enterprise and which is indispensable for the operations of the party, but we could very quickly return to the government those buildings which serve functions of recreation, rest and other luxury things. This would surely reassure most of our party members. For these are the things which cause the most problems.

The second thing: knowing the atmosphere and the composition of the Parliament a little bit, I believe the points comrade Pozsgay has mentioned, we know that the establishment of the electoral districts is underway, and it is stirring up great storms in the counties, it's going to be a separate political gamble how the electoral district can be defined in a way that we could also have potential chances. It is very important to pay some attention to it. The representatives are already pretty much concerned about it, and the term of the Parliament, as far as the bills are concerned, I don't think there would be much resistance on the part of the present Parliament with respect to passing these bills, unless we generate all too much excitement over this issue.

[...]

**Ilona Tatai:** With respect to publicity and the press I want to say that we would badly need the foreign support we have talked about here. After the congress the election process of the president will start which means that we have to get prepared for the fight much earlier. And we have just said that we should inform the public about the trilateral negotiations. We should somehow achieve a better position in this respect too. So we should start getting prepared for the elections, we should start doing something about the press, something about getting the kind of foreign support offered to us by the Italian Communist Party, the German Social Democratic Party and the Austrian Social Democratic Party. I think it is imperative that we start working with them for time flies like an arrow and we are quite incompetent now, quite unprepared.

The other thing I want to tell you is that we can see what comrade Boros has called our attention to, and it will become more obvious soon. It is not acceptable for the society what we say while preparing for the elections concerning the party organizations at the workplace, the party properties and the Workers' Militia. If we can not change our position on these three issues before the elections, and the congress cannot take up a firm position

on them, then we will suffer from a great disadvantage in the elections. The society does not endorse our view in this three matters, and when they cast their vote, it's not going to be party members all of them, the by-elections have shown that we can not achieve good results because we are carrying a drag not settled even among ourselves which the society does not accept.

It would be good to get rid of this drag, rather than being forced to do so, or getting into a situation which requires prompt action. The issue of the party properties has been pending practically for about a year and we can not find a solution to it. It would certainly be possible to solve it if we did not think that the right of ownership will somehow be settled by the new law for it is dependent on the law on land, and we should perhaps be more generous in transferring party properties to the state. The party, MSZMP too should be self-sustaining, with some state subsidy. We could define what sort of possibilities offer themselves in managing some of the properties, and the rest should be turned over to state ownership, because what will happen is what comrade Németh has said, that if we cannot win significant majority in the elections, then we will have no disposal over the party properties anyway, or over trustee's rights either. Others will have them. It would be advisable to anticipate such a possibility.

But we should similarly make a decision on the issue of the Workers' Militia, which is also pending and we have no solution yet. I have already said what my opinion is concerning party organizations at the workplace. One thing has not been clarified in the document, which has then been explained by comrade Pozsgay, we should somehow put this in concerning the party functions fulfilled by members of the armed forces, because it will give rise to a lot of misunderstanding. I wonder if after the CC it will be possible, but I do think it has to be clarified. Thank you very much.

[...]

**Rezső Nyers:** Well, comrades, let us close the discussion, for I think we cannot make any more progress. Well, before the congress we should think about what we could do in the matter of the party properties. I can imagine, on my part, I could fully endorse the transfer of the resort places, the ones in the country. MSZMP is also entitled morally to one resort place, no one can deny that. I don't know, maybe it is also entitled morally to have a guest house. I can imagine that we turn these over to the state in a conspicuous way so that people will learn about it. (*Interruption: A state company.*) I beg your pardon? No, not, your are talking about Szikra, I'm talking about the resort places. (*Interruption: Resort places. Right. sorry.*) As for Szikra, I have already told you my opinion, Szikra can be transferred without much ado, it is a state company today too, I don't see any problem here, but we have to do it in a way that the party will benefit from it morally, let us not kick an own goal. So we have to take a look at it. We have to come to [a decision] before the congress. The resort places immediately, well, the training centers, with the exception of a few. I can imagine that, let's turn these over as well. But it also involves a lot of people too. Then everybody should go with them, the state should take them over and make use of them or rebuild them. It is also quite possible that the way we do it is that we make the resort places available to the public. so we open them up for the public and then we can keep the trustee's rights. (*Interruption: The transfer is better. Even to the trade unions.*) Right. Because that is a kind of a declarative thing. Of course. Yes.

Now, as for the Workers' Militia and the party organizations at the workplace, let's not be fooled by the idea that if we retreat here, then it will be appreciated by anyone, or that we can get into a better position. We have already decided to stop retreating. My view

is that we should give up retreating in these matters. Now then, concerning the party organizations at the workplace: in my view we got caught in the trap set by the opposition because we did not notice it in time, and the demagogue attitude of people like Tölgyessy infects us too and we act accordingly, trying in some way to protect ourselves. Well, that's what I can see here. We are afraid, we are trembling. I don't think we should be. Of course we have to leave the workplace, but the question should not be out in a way, we always say it this way, just like the opposition, should we leave the workplace or should we not. The question is not put in the right way, excuse me, I cannot agree with this. It's defying the law or maintaining the law, that's the question. I used to be a member of a company's party organization before the liberation, and in the Horthy system it could function. Well, only at the workplace of printers. (*Interruption: Right, but there were ten thousand workplaces...*) SO I'm fighting for a right here so that the next party organi[...] (*Interruption is not intelligible.*) please, hear me out, right? I listened to you. Sure, we have to leave. It's clear that we will leave the workplace, but we should leave behind a team or something in the plant, they should be able to stay there. The leaders should be removed, we have decided on it already. And all those who want to leave, should leave completely.

I have talked with these opposition people, Tölgyessy and company and FIDESZ were not present, the others were there almost in full number. And this one too, they raised the issue of the Workers' Militia, they know it as well that the Militia will be dissolved, those who signed it know that it will cease to exist, it will, it will be integrated into the armed forces, and that's that. It will be dissolved, as explained by comrade Németh. Now, to do it in a declarative way ... I think it's total retreat.

Of course in general they are against MSZMP. I think the key problem is renewal at the congress, everything will appear in a new light if we can renew our party at the congress. But if we keep retreating until the congress, then we won't promote our revival, and it's not at all sure that this renewal will be a genuine revival. So that's the way I think about it, but I'm not an autocrat. I don't have any license for that. I only told you my opinion. So let's make a decision. You can vote me down. [...] So finally I proposed that as a first point the Political Executive Committee heard a report on the plenary session of the negotiations, I don't know how to call it, what formula to use, and that it accepted it.

**Imre Pozsgay:** It accepted the agreement which had been signed by the negotiating partners.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, it accepted the agreement and called upon the members of the party ...

**Imre Pozsgay:** ... to implement it.

**Rezső Nyers:** It will take the necessary steps to implement it, and will call upon its members. Let this be point number one. The second point is, and this one should be public. (*In the meantime Grósz is talking to someone: I'm not arguing but when he has finished, both of us should be reminded.*) As a second point we should have what comrade Kovács suggested, which is closely related to this topic, that with the help of the central delegation of MSZMP we should set up a live communication link with the negotiating bodies in the counties and harmonize their negotiations, not through central orders but through political agreements so that we can encourage agreements that are in accord with the ones made centrally. Is that right this way? Then this would be point number two.

As a third point I propose then that we should make sure that this agreement is interpreted properly, we have to insure it, the various issues by immediate action, good

propaganda within the party. And we should also have comrade Pozsgay state, and some other people of the delegation, and clarify each of the points, so we should carry out active propaganda in these matters. And then one of the secretaries should be commissioned – who should be the one to do it? – to collect the measures that must be taken within the party concerning the negotiations and submit it to the presidency or the Political Executive Committee. (*Grósz: Fejti was.*) Yes, fejti, let it be Fejti, Let it be Fejti, Right.

And finally we will have to inform the representatives of the party and ask them emphatically to promote the enforcement of the agreements made at the roundtable talks. That's what should be contained in the resolution. Of course it's sure that ... I'm saying it outside the resolution, I admit that the breakup of the roundtable is not absolutely certain or long-lasting, and I also know that MDF will most likely drop out, or some other organization, any other organization may decide to drop out, so it can be seen now that the social democrats count but little, it's evident (*Interruption: That's bad enough for us.*) it is, and what we would really need is a policy which can make alliances and build a left-wing platform. That's what we should start doing urgently, building out a center from the left, striving to form alliances (*Interruption: 8%*) with the center. We can only do it informally for the time being, but later our policy should [...]

Let's concentrate on the congress, comrades. [The question is] whether we manage to declare a good party, for it's just a declaration now, and then line up most of these people behind it. Those then who just keep doubting, talking nonsense and disagreeing and diverging should leave the party and we should distance ourselves from them. So we have to spell out a policy of identification, accompanied by a dissociation of equal importance. We should not let Ribánszky and his disciples to ... But it's not only Ribánszky and company who accuse us with betraying our class and our nation. We must not be in the same party with these people, there is no point in it. Right. Now the motion is the three points of the resolution, whether we can agree with it, the rest was just talking.

[...]

[Subject:] **The issue of the East German refugees**

**Rezső Nyers:** [...] Next are miscellaneous questions. I suggest we listen to comrade Mária Ormos, she [...] from the DDR ...

**Mária Ormos:** Thank you very much. I think it was right on the part of the presidency to maintain its former decision that this visit should take place. In spite of the fact that in the meantime the unexpected German-German problem broke out. I build my statement of the fact that the conflict has definitely eased a bit, obviously as a result of this meeting because it chowed the good will of the Hungarian party. It relaxed in the sense that the charges in the media, in the press, the radio and the television were immediately stopped on our arrival. There was no more talk about the Hungarian breach of the contract, no more words on the issue of "Judas' money". And this to some extent obviated the further increase of tension.

In the course of the negotiations, however, a propagandistic concept came to light worked out by the leaders of the DDR, primarily with the aim to isolate Hungary and win the support of certain socialist countries, especially that of the Soviet Union. The essence of the conception is that that it was nothing else but a new attack by the Federal Republic of Germany that was dormant for years and flaring up now whose first step is virtually to undermine the internal system of the DDR in a short term, but the long term goal is to

extend the German rule over the whole of Eastern-Central Europe so that eventually it will endanger the order and security of the Soviet Union too. It was obvious though that only very few people endorsed this propaganda in the socialist countries, and above all, what is very important from a Hungarian point of view, the Soviet Union did not. It is evident that this latter factor played a critical role in the relaxation, or the further increase, of tension.

In the course of the negotiations it was positive, at least in my view, that certain Hungarian views were not rejected downright, if not endorsed either. They did not reject the thesis that the 1969 situation and the one today cannot be made equal. They did not deny that at making the 1969 contract neither party, neither they nor we, could anticipate a situation that arose now which is unmanageable for the Hungarian authorities.

Comrade Kurt Hagel's train of thoughts were even more far-reaching when he talked about the problem and their own responsibility in it concerning the fact that the a significant part of the well-qualified young Germans who have no financial problems went on a exodus. He traced it back to the fact that they ill-treated the young generations and failed to give them good education, but he nevertheless admitted that it was an internal German affair and the German Allied Unity party has some responsibility to take.

Another problem was highlighted in another meeting which I believe is interesting for us, for our party too, a problem they have to face in the course of making preparations for their congress coming up I think next June. The essence of it can be summarized in that on the one hand it became clear to economic experts that the economy in the DDR must be made more dynamic for which they cannot find the necessary sources while a process of indebtedness is underway now, however, they want to find the sources for speeding up their economy, some possibilities to make it more dynamic by maintaining the present status quo in politics and in other fields. That it is a great dilemma ... is seen clearly by those who take seriously the questions of presidency and they don't think the way out of this problem is going to be as easy as has been regarded by many in the past few years.

As for issues concerning the situation in Hungary and the position of MSZMP, they expressed their worries partly at the official meetings and partly in the debate following a lecture presented at the Hungarian House of Culture concerning the following: abandoning Marxism-Leninism, abandoning democratic centralism, abandoning planned economy, including issues of ownership. I have to add that several of them raised the issue of the defensive policy of MSZMP at the latter occasion, in the course of the conversation or quasi-conversation following the lecture, as something to be worried about. I note however that in the course of the lecture and debate, in the presence of 150-160 people there was not a single person to bring up the issue, not even by making a reference to it, of the German refugees on their way to emigrate from Hungary, which shows how disciplined and controlled they are.

Finally I want to say add a few informal pieces of news, phenomena which I had the chance to collect while being there. These involved many DDR citizens who, while there was a strong organized campaign concerning the Hungarian behavior, sent letters, messages and showed up in person at the Hungarian embassy, what's more, while I was there, one of them brought a large bunch of flowers to be handed over to me, asking me to deliver it to the Hungarian party, the government, comrade Németh and the Hungarian people for, so to say, the humanitarian attitude shown by the state towards those whose example on his part he did not wish to follow. Here belonged the folder containing these letters which we brought home for the foreign ministry and the news, which was later made public, that the chairman of the commissary court of the German churches had visited the ambassador before he took his public step, and several other organizations made certain gestures in this sense. That's briefly the summary of the essence of this thing,

I guess.

**Rezső Nyers:** Anybody has a question? No comments. It was a very useful visit. Their October ceremony to be held on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be attended by Brúnó Straub F. and Péter Medgyessy. We should also use this visit to ...

**Károly Grósz:** And Kótay from here.

**Rezső Nyers:** Yes, comrade Kótay on behalf of the party. An also, we have indicated in the letter written to comrade Honecker that we are ready for further top-level meetings. The comrade Ormos's visit had already been arranged. Whenever they want it. I think we should not make the first move. But whenever they want this visit, if they do, then we should respond to it as appropriate to the situation. And let's consider the problem to be a pending one. This 1969 agreement, it must have been put back in force. [...]

**Miklós Németh:** [...] There is no significant increase now, but some [East German citizens] do come over. It's mainly the Czech attitude that causes us headaches. There is no way of knowing what they agreed on, so this ... they confiscate their papers and send them back, they don't let them come over here.

**Rezső Nyers:** That's likely to be an agreement. Well, this is one form we suggested to them that they should seal it off, it's all the same for us what they do in Czechoslovakia.

**Miklós Németh:** So they are now waiting for us to seal our border, apparently, and then, well we have to think it over very carefully, since they still have some foreign currency quotas to spare, perhaps we could arrange for them an intensive tourist program in November-December, and then another few thousand can stay here.

**Mária Ormos:** I can add to it that in the course of our talks with Kurt Hagel I touched upon this issue saying that there is no other solution to it but that the foreign ministers together with some experts should start working. They accepted it, adding a dangerous note to it that the socialist foreign ministers should come together anyway.

**Miklós Németh:** Well, they initiate it on every level, not only for the foreign ministers but in every field.

**Ilona Tatai:** We can see some changes in economic matters too, the Leipzig fair was not mentioned at all anywhere. Everybody came home without being asked by any of their partners.

**Rezső Nyers:** Beyond what they decided according to their plans, and they made a fair statement about it too, they keep their ground well in a disciplined and correct way. That's good. Yes.

**Miklós Németh:** The great dilemma concerns what comrade Ormos said earlier about making their economy more dynamic and the lack of sources, for we are informed that the Soviet loan that has been given, for they and the Czechs opened credit for the rate of exchange profit, unlike in our case. This is more than one billion rubles for the Czechs and two and a half billion for the DDR. Now, it leaked out, and the trump is now in the hands

of the West Germans because with their three and a half or four billion marks per year, but I think sanity will win over there and they will grant it to them and continue to do so because it is in their interest to stabilize the DDR somehow. They also sent a secret delegation to IMF, we are informed about that too.

**Rezső Nyers:** It's evident that the Soviets will be helping them economically but they don't know, or they have to turn to the West, and for that ... is needed. (*Interruption: with this emigration policy.*) Yes, but they cannot until ... (*Unintelligible interruption.*) Yes, it will start. Now then, are there going to be talks between the foreign ministers?

**Miklós Németh:** No, not really at the moment, but we have indicated that we are ready. They have not responded yet.

**Rezső Nyers:** So the ball is over there now.

**Miklós Németh:** Yes.





Document 86.  
Record of Conversation  
between Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher, London.  
[German reunification and East European stability].  
*September 23, 1989.*



**Record of Conversation Between Mikhail Gorbachev  
and Prime Minister of Great Britain Margaret Thatcher**

September 23, 1989

**Thatcher.** [...] I know that it is not easy to carry out a political reform. You began to implement the reform from the above, and it would be impossible otherwise. Here, as I understand, you are in full control of the situation. But to carry out an economic reform is even more difficult, I know this from my own experience. [...]

You have now reached the stage where every new step is more difficult than the previous one. It is important for people to see results, even though it is a politically ungratifying task. For instance, I had to wait for two years before the first results. All this time I was criticized, and when the success came, it was received as something natural, and nobody thanked me. How much time would you need to get the first results? Two years or less? [...]

[...] **Thatcher.** But you need to teach the people to live day by day, not on future credits.

**Gorbachev.** We are teaching, teaching with life.

If you add to what we have just said the fact that these processes are unfolding in the country with 120 nationalities and ethnicities, you can imagine what a tight knot all the problems present together. As you know, the Plenum of the CC CPSU that has just ended, analyzed the issues of inter-ethnic relations in depth. The Plenum's resolutions are very important. Their essence is to balance the nationalities policy, to rejuvenate the Soviet federation and to fill it with a real meaning. I will tell you honestly, so far our state was considered federal only formally, and in reality everything worked like in a typical unitary state – from the top to the bottom. The decisions of this Plenum are supposed to change that, to create mechanisms which in practice would help to remove the tensions from the inter-ethnic relations without interfering with basic interests of individuals, of the nationalities, and of the society in the economic, cultural, and other spheres. Otherwise, the inter-ethnic tensions could bury *perestroika*. This is how the issue stands now.

I would also like to state openly the following thought. Sometimes I hear, even here in the West: why do we have to open up so many fronts simultaneously? But how can you reform the economy without a reform of the political system? It will not work. And we already have the sad experiences with Khrushchev, and Kosygin with Brezhnev. How can you reform both the economy and the politics without democratization of the society, without *glasnost*, which incorporate individuals into an active socio-political life? It will not work either. How can you make prognoses and form healthy inter-ethnic relations separately from the economic, political, and democratic reforms in the society as a whole? How can you carry out *perestroika* itself without rejuvenating the party?

All these issues are inseparably linked, and that is why we are saying that *perestroika* is not just a reform, it is a genuine revolution, our second socialist revolution. And we are making great efforts to carry it out.

[...] **Thatcher.** I would like to raise the issue of the situation in the countries of Eastern Europe. I was very impressed by the courage and patriotism of General Jaruzelski in Poland. Of course, for you, the future of Poland and its alliance with you have a big significance. I noted that you calmly accepted the results of the elections in Poland, and, in general, the processes in that country and in other East European countries. I

Other causes of the aforementioned weaknesses and errors should be named:

- Foreign policy of the Soviet state has been paralyzed by the sense of moral responsibility of the CPSU for the present complications of the communist parties in the countries of Eastern Europe.
- On all stages [the process] of preparations and implementation foreign policy was in the hands of people personally responsible for Soviet actions in the spirit of Brezhnev doctrine. Many of them still adhere to the old political assessments and preserve personal ties with national governing cadres with conservative neo-Stalinist orientation. They become the source of not quite objective information about events in the country [of their location].
- Principles of staffing and formation of Soviet diplomatic services in the countries of Eastern Europe and traditions alive in the activity of all representations do not correspond to the present complex situation in the region. People who were sent there are, as a rule, non-professional ambassadors who lord over the personnel of Soviet services abroad in their customary commanding style and stick to conservative tenets aimed at the preservation of the status quo. Messages they send to Moscow get filtered through strict ideological filters. Their contacts in the country are almost exclusively with the state-government establishment. All this significantly devalues the information they obtain and distort the real picture about the country. Obtaining this sort of information does not require keeping so many services in the field; similar conclusions can be drawn in Moscow from the analysis of the official media of these countries.
- East European departments of the Foreign Ministry are staffed with the cadres who have been schooled in corresponding embassies and who rely in their practical work on the "battle experience" [zakalka] they have obtained there.

The analogous picture is in the area of trade cooperation.

After the war instead of the traditional for Central and Eastern Europe division of labor oriented towards the Western part of the continent, under our strong pressure emerged a relatively self-isolated economic system under the domination of the USSR. Following the Soviet example, the countries adhere to the principle of autarkic development of their economies. The line towards integration was taken only in the 1970's, however it did not bring the expected fruits, because the proposed measures were largely voluntarist by nature, and hardly reflected the interests of the countries and immediate subjects of economic activity. Cooperation therefore boiled down to the centralized barter, and commercial and financial relations, as well as the concerns for efficiency played a subservient role. Problems of scientific-technical progress had not been resolved, the quality of goods on the COMECON market remained shoddy. For these reasons centrifugal tendencies in economic relations grew stronger, and the COMECON lost its prestige and now is on the brink of total collapse.

In the first half of the 1980's attempts were made to revive its activity through formalistic bureaucratic programs and skin-lifting changes in the mechanisms of cooperation. However, all these measures came to naught because of lack of coordination between internal mechanisms and different directions in the foreign economic policies of various countries.

After the beginning of *perestroika* the USSR proposed a course aimed at the fundamental renewal of forms and methods of economic cooperation. Rigid definition of the main parameters of integrationist mechanisms characteristic of the administrative-commanding type of management, was declared unworkable. A new concept of an integrated socialist market reflected the goal proclaimed in the majority of East European

Document 87.  
Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary  
[The end of Socialism].  
*October 5, 1989.*



**Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary**  
**[The End of Socialism]**  
October 5, 1989

M.S. [Gorbachev] is flying to the GDR [to celebrate] its 40th anniversary. He is very reluctant. Called me two times. Today [called and said]: I polished the text (of the speech) to the last letter – you know, they would scrutinize it under a microscope...I will not say a word in support of Honecker. But I will support the Republic and the revolution.

Today in Dresden – 20,000 demonstrate. Yesterday there was a demonstration in Leipzig. Information is coming that in the presence of Gorbachev people will storm the Wall. Awful scenes when a special train [with East German refugees] passed from Prague to the GDR via Dresden. West German television shot everything and now is broadcasting this all over the GDR. All Western media is full of articles about German reunification.

Tomorrow the congress of the HSWP will announce the self-liquidation of “socialist PRH” [ People’s Republic of Hungary].

Not to mention Poland: the PUWP not only lost power – it will hardly survive till its next congress in February.

In a word, the total dismantling of socialism as a world phenomenon has been proceeding...Perhaps it is inevitable and good...For this is a reunification of mankind on the basis of common sense. And a common fellow from Stavropol [i.e. Gorbachev] set this process in motion.

*Source: Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev. The Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation  
Fond 2, Opis 2*

Translated by Vladislav Zubok  
The National Security Archive





Document 88.  
Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary  
[On Gorbachev's Western Friends].  
*October 9, 1989.*



**Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary**  
**[On Gorbachev's Western Friends]**  
October 9, 1989

All of Europe is raving about M.S. [Gorbachev] in Berlin. And many whisper "in our ear": it is very well that the USSR has spoken up, although in a delicate way, against the "reunification of Germany" now.

[Vadim] Zagladin has just returned after a tour across France. He met with many – from [President Francois] Mitterand to city mayors. He sent to Moscow a shower of cables about his conversations. And everyone says in a single voice – nobody needs one Germany. And [Secretary of the French President] Attali talked with us about a revival of a solid Franco-Soviet alliance, "including military integration – camouflaged as a the use of armies in the struggle against natural disasters."

*Nota bene!* [Attention] Thatcher...in her conversation with M.S...suddenly asked "not to take notes." She is decidedly against "reunification of Germany." But, she says, I cannot speak about it back home, or in NATO.

In brief, they want to prevent this [reunification] with our hands.

*Source: Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev. The Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation  
Fond 2, Opis 2*

Translated by Vladislav Zubok  
The National Security Archive



Document 89.

Record of Conversation between Gorbachev and Egon Krenz  
[Possibilities of German-German-Soviet trilateral cooperation].  
*November 1, 1989.*



**Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and General Secretary of the  
Central Committee of the Socialist United Party of Germany Egon Krenz.**

November 1, 1989

**Gorbachev.** The Soviet people are very interested in everything that is going on now in the GDR. We hope to get the most recent information from you, although, of course, we know a lot. The situation in the GDR, judging by everything we see, is moving at an increasing speed. Is there a danger to get left behind the reforms? Remember, we said in Berlin that to be behind is always to lose. We know that from our own experience.

[...] I cannot tell you that we have already "broken the horse of perestroika", that turned out to be quite restless. In any case, we have not completely tamed it yet. Sometimes it even tries to throw the rider off. But we have gained very valuable experience.

**Krenz.** ... At the Politburo we came to the conclusion that the crisis has not emerged in the last several months. Many problems have accumulated over the years.

But the main mistake was probably in that we did not make serious conclusions from the new processes of social development, which began in the Soviet Union, other socialist countries, and which were ripe in the GDR itself. Because if you have the most important ally, you have to understand and share its problems and hardships. One cannot declare friendship in words, and at the same time stay on the sidelines, when your ally is trying to deal with its difficult problems. People who are used to think felt that suddenly we have lost our unity with the Soviet Union, and that we ourselves erected this barrier.

**Gorbachev.** From the political point of view, the situation is clear, but from a simply human standpoint—dramatic. I was also concerned about this. In general, I had good relations with Honecker, but it seemed recently as if he lost his sight. If he had been willing to make the necessary changes in policy on his own initiative 2 or 3 years ago, everything would have been different now. But apparently, he had undergone some kind of a shift, he ceased to see real processes in the world and in his own country. It was a personal drama, but because Honecker occupied a very high position, it grew into a political drama.

**Krenz.** Yes, you are right, it is a drama, and for me too, because Honecker brought me up, he was my political mentor.

**Gorbachev.** Some people now speculate on that, but I think you should not react to that.

**Krenz.** For Honecker the turn probably occurred exactly in 1985, when you were elected General Secretary of the CC CPSU. In you he saw a threat to his authority, because he considered himself the most dynamic political leader. He lost all touch with reality, and did not rely on the Politburo collective. Mittag and Herman did him a very bad service in this respect. The first— as a strategist, and the second— as an executive.

[...] **Gorbachev.** This is a familiar picture. Some time ago, when I already was a Politburo member, I practically did not know our budget. Once we were working with Nikolai Ryzhkov on some request of Andropov's having to do with the budgetary issues, and we, naturally, decided that we should learn about them. But Yuri V. Andropov said:

do not get in there, it is not your business. Now we know why he said so. It was not a budget, but hell knows what.

[...] **Gorbachev.** We knew about your situation, about your economic and financial ties with the FRG, and we understood how it all could turn out. For our part, we were carrying out our obligations before the GDR, including those on oil deliveries, even though some of it had to be reduced at a certain time. Erich Honecker was not very honest with us about those things. We knew about that, but we exercised reserve and patience, led by the highest political considerations.

**Krenz.** It is very important to define the division of labor between the GDR and the Soviet Union better. It is one of our main reserves. The situation here is far from ideal. We need to remove the existing barriers. There should be only one criterion-- effectiveness and mutual benefit.

**Gorbachev.** The issue of the division of labor stands as a major problem in our country as well. The republics that produce raw materials demand a redistribution of money, because they think that those that produce finished products get too much. They present very harsh conditions, up to the limiting and stopping of deliveries.

By the way, yesterday in the Supreme Soviet one of the deputies--Nikolai Shmelev--raised the question about getting the real information about all our foreign economic relations, including the relations with the socialist countries, to the Supreme Soviet.

**Krenz.** We are prepared to discuss seriously those issues once again with our Soviet comrades.

**Gorbachev.** I suggested the topic of cooperation to Honecker many times. He was in favor of direct connections, but spoke about cooperation without any enthusiasm, and especially about joint ventures. But it is precisely cooperation that had the greatest potential of mutual benefit. You cannot ride on the deliveries of our raw materials all the time. There are some strict limits here.

[...] **Gorbachev.** Yesterday Alexander N. Yakovlev received Zbigniew Brzezinski, and, as you know, he has a head with "global brains". And he said: if today the events turned out in such a way that unification of Germany became a reality, it would mean a collapse for many things. I think, so far we have held the correct line: stood firmly in favor of the coexistence of two German states, and as a result, came to a wide international recognition of the GDR, achieved the Moscow Treaty, gave a boost to the Helsinki process. Therefore, we should confidently follow this same course.

You must know: all serious political figures--Thatcher, Mitterand, Andreotti, Jaruzelski, and even the Americans, though their position has recently exhibited some nuances--are not looking forward to German unification. Moreover, in today's situation it would probably have an explosive character. The majority of Western leaders do not want to see the dissolution of NATO as well as of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Serious politicians understand that those are factors of the necessary equilibrium. However, Mitterand feels like he has to mention his sympathy for the idea of the German unification. The Americans are also speaking about such sympathies for the Germans' pull toward the unification. But I think that they do it as a favor to Bonn, and also because to some extent, they are anxious about too much rapprochement between the FRG and the USSR.



Therefore, I repeat, now, the best course of action is to continue the same line in the German affairs, which we have successfully developed so far. By the way, Willy Brandt shares this opinion also. He believes that the GDR is a great victory of socialism, even though he has his own understanding of socialism. A liquidation of the republic, in his opinion, would have been a bust for the social democrats. Therefore, I think, we all should start from the following formula: history itself decided that there should be two German states. But of course, you cannot get away from the FRG. The need for human contacts presupposes normal relations with the FRG. You should not disrupt your ties with the FRG, although, certainly, they should be kept under control.

I am convinced that we should coordinate our relations with the FRG better, although Honecker tried to evade this necessity. We know about your relations with the FRG, and you know about our relations with it. Why should we try to hide anything from each other! It would make sense to talk about the possibilities of trilateral cooperation between the USSR, the GDR, and the FRG, especially in the economic sphere. [...]

The situation in Hungary and in Poland today is such, that they have nowhere else to go, as they say, because they have drowned in the financial dependence on the West. Today some people criticize us: they say, what is the Soviet Union doing--allowing Poland and Hungary to "sail" to the West. But we cannot take Poland on our balance. Gierak accumulated \$48 billion dollars of debt. Poland has already paid off 49 billion, and it still owes almost \$50 billion. As far as Hungary is concerned, the International Monetary Fund has dictated its harsh ultimatum already under Kadar.

**Krenz.** This is not our way.

**Gorbachev.** You need to take this into account in your relationship with the FRG.

[...] **Gorbachev.** We need to think through all this, and to find formulas that would allow people to realize their human needs. Otherwise we will be forced to accept all kinds of ultimatums. Maybe we can direct our International Departments and Foreign Ministries to think about possible initiatives together. Clearly, your constructive steps should be accompanied with demands for certain obligations from the other side. Chancellor Kohl keeps in touch with me and with you. We need to influence him. Once under the pressure of the opposition, he found himself on the horse of nationalism. The right wing starts to present their demands for the unification of Germany to the Soviet Union, and appeals to the US. The logic is simple--all the peoples are united, why we, Germans, do not have this right?

**Krenz.** We have already taken a number of steps. First of all, we gave orders to the border troops not to use weapons at the border, except in the cases of direct attacks on the soldiers. Secondly, we adopted a draft of Law on Foreign Travel at the Politburo. We will present it for a public discussion, and we plan to pass it in the People's Council even before Christmas. [...]

**Gorbachev.** Kohl was visibly worried when I mentioned the perverse interpretations of some of our agreements with the FRG in my speech in Berlin. He immediately gave me a telephone call regarding that.

**Krenz.** Yes, he is worried, I noticed it in my conversation with him. He was even forgetting to finish phrases.

**Gorbachev.** Kohl, it seems, is not a big intellectual, but he enjoys certain popularity in his country, especially among the petit bourgeois public.

[...] **Gorbachev.** I was told that he (Honecker), did not adequately understand even our discussions in the Politburo. But we do not have any ill feelings towards him. Had he made the right conclusions two or three years ago, it would have had a big importance for the GDR, and for him personally. In any case, one cannot deny the things your party and people have achieved in the past. We have a complete mutual understanding about that.

**Krenz** cordially thanks **Gorbachev** for the support, openness, and good advice.

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

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya  
for The National Security Archive

Document 90.

Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary  
[Gorbechev dissolved the Yalta world order peacefully].  
*November 10, 1989.*



**Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary**  
**[Gorbachev dissolved the Yalta world order peacefully]**  
November 10, 1989

The Berlin Wall has collapsed. This entire era in the history of the socialist system is over. After the PUWP and the HSWP went Honecker. Today we received messages about "retirement" of Deng Xiaopeng and [Bulgarian leader Todor] Zhivkov. Only our "best friends" Castro, Ceaucescu, [and] Kim Il Sung are still around – people who hate our guts.

But the main thing is the GDR, the Berlin Wall. For it has to do not only with "socialism" but about the shift in world balance of forces. This is the end of Yalta ... the Stalinist legacy and "the defeat of Hitlerite Germany."

That is what Gorbachev has done. And he has indeed turned out to be a great leader. He has sensed the pace of history and helped history to find a natural channel.

*Source: Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev. The Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation  
Fond 2, Opis 2*

Translated by Vladislav Zubok  
The National Security Archive



Document 91.

Record of telephone Conversation between Gorbachev and Chancellor Kohl,  
Moscow-Bonn

[Kohl wants to see more dynamic changes in the GDR].

*November 11, 1989.*





**Record of Telephone Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev  
and Chancellor of the FRG Helmut Kohl.  
Moscow-Bonn  
November 11, 1989**

The conversation occurred on Helmut Kohl's request.

**Kohl.** I am glad to hear you, Mr. General Secretary. I would like to express my appreciation in regards to your address yesterday. It is a very good step. ...

We want the people in the GDR to stay home, and we do not strive for all the GDR population to move to the FRG. And not at all because, as some are claiming, we would not be able to resolve the problems that would result from that--for example, 230,000 people moved from the GDR to the FRG during this year, and all of them were accommodated. But a mass migration to the FRG would be an absurd development--we want the Germans to be able to build their future at home.

I would also like to inform you, even though the information is still preliminary, that today by 12 noon hundreds of thousands of people have crossed the GDR border. However, there is an impression that the majority of them are just visitors, and have no intention to stay in the FRG. The number of people who actually want to move to the FRG for permanent residency is much lower than we would be concerned about.

I recently told you that we did not want destabilization of the situation in the GDR. I am still of the same position. I do not know on what scale Egon Krenz really plans to carry out the reforms. However, in the situation such as they have now, the GDR leadership should act in a more dynamic way.

I would like to repeat, that I appreciate your contacting me in connection with these events. Next week, immediately after I return from Poland, I would like to give you a call again, if you do not have any objections, to discuss the new developments with you.

**Gorbachev.** That would be good. I recall how we discussed the relations between our two peoples, the general developments in Europe in the philosophical sense. As you can see, Mr. Chancellor, those discussions were not simple exercises in rhetoric. Deep changes are underway in the world. It also concerns the East European countries. One more example of that is the beginning of the reform process in Bulgaria. And the changes happen even faster than we could have even imagined recently.

Of course, the changes could take different forms in different countries, be more or less deep. However, it is important that the stability is preserved that all the sides act in a responsible way.

All in all, I think that the basis for mutual understanding is improving. We are getting closer to each other. And this is very important.

[...] In particular, I recommended to Egon Krenz that the leadership of the republic should prepare the reforms while carefully taking into the account the mood in the society, and on the basis of an open dialogue with public forces, public movements in the country.

I understand that all Europeans, and not only Europeans, closely follow the developments in the GDR. It is a very important point in world politics. But it is also a fact that you and me--the FRG, and the Soviet Union--have even more interest in these developments both because of the history, and because of the character of our relations today.

In general, I can say that there is a certain kind of triangle forming now, in which

everything has to be thought-out and balanced. I think that our relations today allow us to do everything the way it should be [done].

Of course, any kind of change means some kind of instability. That is why, when I speak about preserving stability, what I mean is, that we, on all sides, should make carefully thought-out steps in relation to each other.

I think, Mr. Chancellor, we are experiencing a historic turn to new relations, to a new world. And we should not allow ourselves to harm this turn by our awkward actions. Or, moreover, to push the developments toward an unpredictable course, toward chaos, by forcing the events. It would be undesirable in all respects.

That is why I take your words, that you have said in our conversation today, very seriously. And I hope, that you will use your authority, your political weight, and influence in order to keep others within the limits adequate for the time being, and for the requirements of our time.

**Kohl.** I think that it is fortunate that the relations between the USSR and the FRG have reached such a high level of development that they have now. And I especially appreciate the good personal contacts that have developed between us. In my opinion, our relations are beyond simply official contacts, that they have a personal character. I believe that they could continue to develop like this in the future. I am ready for that. I understand that a personal relationship does not change the essence of the problems, but it can make their solutions easier.

Coming back to the assessment of the situation in the GDR, I would like to mention that the problem now lies in the sphere of psychology. Honecker's course, who rejected any reforms up until the end, put the new leadership of the GDR in a very difficult situation. Krenz's "team" now has to operate under a horrible time pressure, and this is where I see the main problem. You are right, they need time for drafting and implementing the reforms. But how would you explain it to the population of the GDR?

[...]

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

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya  
for The National Security Archive

Document 92.  
The Malta Summit  
Notes from of Anatoly Chernyaev.  
*December 2, 1989.*



**The Malta Summit**  
**[Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev]**  
December 2, 1989

[...] **Bush.** ...Since the idea of this summit was proposed, many important events have been taking place in the international arena. I assume that during the forthcoming exchange we will be able to share our views of these changes, not only in Eastern Europe, but also in other regions, in order to improve our mutual understanding of where we stand. I am in favor of not only an exchange in the presence of our delegations, but only on eye-to-eye basis. I believe we should meet more often.

**Gorbachev.** I agree. I have a feeling that we have already talked, and this meeting is the continuation of our useful conversations.

**Bush.** Precisely...Concerning our attitude toward *perestroika*. I would like to say as clearly as possible that I agree completely with what you said in New York: the world would be better if *perestroika* succeeds. Not long ago there was considerable doubt about this in the United States. Back in New York [in December 1988] you said there were elements that did not wish for the success of *perestroika*. I cannot say that there are no such elements in the United States. But I can definitely say that serious, thinking people in the United States do not share such opinions.

These shifts in public mood in the United States are affected by the changes in Eastern Europe, the whole process of *perestroika*...

I would like now to lay out a number of positive initiatives that, in our opinion, could in general outline directions for our joint work to prepare an official summit in the United States...

[Bush also touched on regional issues, including the position of the U.S. with regard to the situation in Central America. Then he proposed to discuss the issues of disarmament]

**Bush.** We would like to inquire if it is possible for the Soviet Union to publish roughly the same amount of data on the Soviet military budget as we do it in the United States. I believe that our publications give a rather comprehensive impression about what kind of military activities are undertaken in our country. I am sure that your intelligence services can confirm this authoritatively.

**Gorbachev.** They report to me, on the contrary, that you do not publish everything.

**Bush.** I am convinced that the publication of more detailed data on military budgets, on a mutual basis, would encourage trust in this sphere. [...]

**Gorbachev.** ...I would like to share with you some of my thoughts of a philosophical nature. I believe it is important for us both to discuss which lessons should be drawn from past experience, from the Cold War...Not everything that has taken place should be considered in a negative light. For 45 years we have been managing to avoid a big war. This single fact alone says that not everything was so bad in the past. Nevertheless, one conclusion is obvious – the reliance on force, on military superiority and the arms race that stemmed from it, did not withstand the test [*ne opravdali sebia*]. And our two countries

seem to realize it better than anyone else.

To no avail was the ideological confrontation which kept us busy maligning each other. We reached a dangerous brink. And it is good that we managed to stop. It is good that mutual trust emerged between our countries...

Cold War methods, methods of confrontation suffered a strategic defeat. We have come to this realization. And common people have realized this, perhaps even better. I do not want to preach here. People simply interfere into policy-making. Ecological problems, problems of preservation of natural resources, problems with regard to bad consequences of technological progress. And all this is understandable, essentially this is the question of survival. And this kind of public mood is strongly affecting us, politicians.

Therefore, we together – the USSR and the US – can do a lot on this stage to change radically our old approaches. We had already felt it in our contacts with the Reagan Administration. And this process continues today. Look, how we opened ourselves to each other...

But in both countries there are people – and quite a few of them – who simply scare us... Why do I mention this? From American political circles one hears a thesis: the Soviet Union has begun its *perestroika*, has been changing its line under the pressure of the Cold War policy [of the United States]. They say that everything is crumbling in Eastern Europe and that this proves that those who had relied on Cold War methods were right. And if so, nothing should be changed in this policy. One should increase pressure and prepare more baskets to collect fruits. Mister President, this is a dangerous illusion. [...]

You considered the question: what kind of Soviet Union is in the U.S. interest – the dynamic, stable, solid one or the one struggling with all kinds of problems. I am informed about the advice you have been receiving...

**Bush.** I hope you noticed that while the changes in Eastern Europe have been going on, the United States has not engaged in condescending declarations aimed at damaging the Soviet Union. There are people in the United States who accuse me of being too cautious. It is true, I am a prudent man, but I am not a coward, and my Administration will seek to avoid doing anything that would damage your position in the world. But I was insistently advised to something of that sort – to climb the Berlin Wall and to make broad declarations. My Administration, however, is avoiding these steps, we are in favor of reserved behavior.

**Gorbachev.** I welcome your words. I regard them as a manifestation of political will. It is important for me...

Now on Central America... I want to emphasize again: we pursue no goals in Central America. We do not want to gain bridge-heads, strong-points. You should be certain of this.

*Source: Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev. The Archive of Gorbachev Foundation. Excerpts were published in "Years of Difficult Decisions," Moscow, 1993, pp. 173-197*

Translated by Vladislav Zubok  
The National Security Archive

Document 93.

Record of Conversation between Gorbachev and Hans-Dietrich Genscher  
[Gorbachev criticizes Kohl's GDR policy]

*December 5, 1989.*





**Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev  
and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FRG H.-D. Genscher  
December 5, 1989.**

**Gorbachev.** I have to tell you directly--I cannot understand Federal Chancellor Kohl who spoke about his famous Ten Points concerning the FRG's intentions regarding the GDR. It must be stated directly, that those are ultimatum demands that are imposed on the independent and sovereign German state. By the way, even though he only mentioned the GDR, what the Chancellor said, concerns us all.

First of all, these ten points appeared after we had a constructive and positive exchange of opinions, after we had reached agreements on several fundamental issues. You would think that he should be presenting such a document only after relevant consultations with partners. Or does the Federal Chancellor think that he does not need them any more? He, probably, already thinks that his music is playing, the march, and that he is already marching with it. I do not think that such steps would contribute to the strengthening of trust and mutual understanding, contribute to filling our agreements with life. What kind of "Europe building" one can talk about, if they act in such a way?

You know that we talked with Chancellor Kohl on the telephone. I was telling him that the GDR was a factor of not only European, but of world politics, and that both the East and the West would carefully follow everything that is happening there. Kohl agreed with that, he assured me that the FRG did not want destabilization of the situation in the GDR, and that they would act in a balanced way. However, his practical steps deviate from his assurances.

I told Kohl, that the GDR is an important partner and ally of the Soviet Union. We are also interested in developing our relations with the FRG. This is a triangle that plays a special role in the European and global development. Everything has to be carefully balanced in this triangle. And now he is issuing an ultimatum. He gives directions about what road the GDR should take, what structures they should create. The FRG leadership is simply bursting with a desire to command. And, let me assure you, everybody can feel that.

Maybe it is Bush who is heating the situation up? Still, you have to think through your moves two or three, or five, steps ahead, to foresee their consequences.

[...]Yesterday Chancellor Kohl, without much thought, stated that President Bush supported the idea of confederation. What is next? What does a confederation mean? Confederation presupposes common defense, and common foreign policy. Where will the FRG find itself then--in NATO or in the Warsaw Treaty? Or maybe it will become neutral? And what would NATO mean without the FRG? And after all, what will come next? Did you think about everything? What will happen with the existing agreements between us? Do you call this politics?

**Shevardnadze.** Today you apply this style to the GDR, tomorrow you might apply it to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and then--to Austria.

**Gorbachev.** With all the responsibility, I can tell you that you have demonstrated not the best style of politics--you do not separate your position from Kohl's. In any case, I cannot call him a responsible and predictable politician

**Genscher.** [...] On the eve of my trip to Moscow I spoke with Chancellor Kohl in

Brussels. His statement of ten points does not represent a schedule of urgent measures, it defines the long-term perspective. The GDR will decide on its own, will respond to his proposal--yes, or no.

We are interested in the internal stability in the GDR. We believe that by his statement the Federal Chancellor contributed to the strengthening of that stability. There were no directives, or ultimatums, in that statement. We know that neither Poland nor Hungary has such impressions. These ten points, and our policy, are supported by all parties represented in the Bundestag, including the SDPG.

At the same time, we dissociate ourselves from the internal problems of the GDR, for which the FRG bears no responsibility.

**Gorbachev.** I could not even anticipate that you would assume the role of Federal Chancellor Kohl's defense attorney. Let us take the third point of his statement. He spoke for "comprehensive expansion of our assistance, and our cooperation, if the GDR makes the necessary basic changes in the political and economic system," and if the state leadership of the GDR reaches agreements with the "opposition groups," and if the GDR follows this course irreversibly. What do you call it except a crude interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state?

**Shevardnadze.** Even Hitler did not allow himself anything like that.

**Gorbachev.** More than that, Chancellor Kohl demands that the Socialist United Party of Germany gives up its monopoly on power. He speaks about the need to abolish the "bureaucratic planned economy". Economic improvement, according to him, can only be achieved when the GDR opens its doors for Western investment, creates conditions for market economy, and ensures opportunities for private enterprise.

I think that the GDR has to undertake fundamental reforms. However, this is their internal affair. Chancellor Kohl, meanwhile, is treating the citizens of the GDR, in essence, like his own subjects. This is simply blatant revanchism, which leaves nothing from his positive assurances, puts all the agreements we have achieved in question (...)

**Genscher.** I would like to draw your attention to point two, where it is said that the federal government of the FRG would like to expand cooperation with the GDR on the basis of equality in all spheres.

**Gorbachev.** Stop defending it, Mr. Genscher. Point Two is completely devalued by Point Three. In the Czarist Russia, when a political prisoner was released, he was told that he could live wherever he chooses, except the 18 counties, and there were only 18 counties in Russia. Where, do you think, would he live? It is the same with this statement.

**Genscher.** This is not so ...

**Gorbachev.** The Chancellor's statement is a political miss. We cannot just let it go unnoticed. We are not inclined to play diplomacy with you. If you want to cooperate with us--we are ready. If not, we are going to draw political conclusions. I am asking you to take what I have just said seriously.

**Genscher.** I am speaking seriously. There are no conditions in the Ten Points. These are just suggestions, and the GDR should decide whether they are suitable or not.

**Gorbachev.** Then it is even more of an ultimatum. Judging from all this, you have prepared a funeral for the European processes, and in such a form.

**Genscher.** This is not so. I am in favor of speaking openly. You should not interpret point two and point three in such a way. I would not want to be accused of a lack of good will. The FRG does not want to interfere in anybody's internal affairs.

[...] **Gorbachev.** We think that the changes in the GDR are good, but you should not interfere with all kinds of instructions and advice.

**Genscher.** We respect these changes.

**Gorbachev.** I am speaking about the FRG now. There is some confusion in minds there, a bustle. One can feel, that some people there are already bursting from what is going on. Some people are beginning to lose their minds, and they do not see anything around themselves. And politics without minds is no politics. This way you can spoil everything that we have created together. The Germans are emotional people, but you are also philosophers. You have to remember what mindless politics led to in the past.

**Genscher.** We are aware of our historic mistakes, and we are not going to repeat them again. The processes that are going on now in the GDR and in the FRG do not deserve such a harsh judgment. [...]

**Gorbachev.** In short, you want to say that you are acting correctly and responsibly. This is my conclusion. I would like to emphasize once more that we assign a special importance to what is going on, and that we will monitor everything very carefully.

**Genscher.** Yes, the policy of the federal government is responsible and predictable, otherwise, I would have nothing to say.

**Gorbachev.** I am not speaking now about your overall policy, only about the Ten Points. You are forgetting the past. Everybody can see that Chancellor Kohl is rushing, that he is artificially stimulating the events, and by doing that, he is undermining the European process that is being developed with such difficulty. How can he think that we are unable to give an impassionate judgment about his behavior[?]

**Genscher.** I have already said that you should not dramatize the events. [...]

**Gorbachev.** [...] By the way, it seems to me, Mr. Genscher, that you only learned about his Ten Points from the speech in the Bundestag.

**Genscher.** Yes, it is true, but this is our internal affair. We will deal with it ourselves.

**Gorbachev.** You can see that your internal affair makes everybody concerned. But the main thing is that we understand each other.

It seems to me that you are satisfied with what we are going to tell the press. Today we are still speaking like this. However, keep in mind that if some in your country do not come to their senses, then tomorrow we will make another statement.

**Genscher.** Let me assure you that we will take the most responsible approach. Please do not think that I do not mean what I am saying.

**Gorbachev.** Do not take everything I said personally, Mr. Genscher. You know that we feel about you in a special way, not like we feel about others. We hope that you understood everything correctly. Thank you for the conversation.

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Секретариат Президента СССР  
Москва, Кремль  
1988 г.

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

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya  
for The National Security Archive

Document 94.

**Memorandum from the CC CPSU International Department  
[Towards a New Concept of Relations Between the USSR and the States of  
Central and Eastern Europe.]**

*January 5, 1990.*