

June 10, 1989

**Agreement about the Commencement of Substantial
Political Negotiations between the Hungarian
Socialist Workers' Party, the Members of the
Opposition Roundtable and the Organizations of the
Third Side**

Citation:

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<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/113161>

Summary:

The agreement was signed at the first plenary meeting of the National Roundtable talks. The document put on record the legal framework and the conditions of the subsequent tripartite negotiations which lasted until 18 September. At the next meeting, on 21 June, two intermediate-level committees were established for political and social-economic issues, each having six working subcommittees in which the bulk of the legal work leading to the establishment of parliamentary democracy in Hungary was carried out.

Between March and June the crucial question of the transition was whether the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party [HSWP] was willing to eventually accept the fact that it would have to negotiate with a unified opposition represented by the Opposition Roundtable [ORT]. Although the HSWP leadership tried to do everything it could to prevent this, by the beginning of June it gave up its previous position. However, the opposition parties had to make a serious concession too, since it was a precondition of the HSWP in agreeing to start official negotiations on the political transition with the ORT that the talks should be tripartite. The "third side" included mass organizations and civil associations, all of which were supporters of the HSWP and/or represented left-wing political ideas.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

AGREEMENT About the Commencement of Substantial Political Negotiations between the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the Members of the Opposition Roundtable and the Organizations of the Third Side, 10 June 1989. The necessity to help the nation out of a serious political and economic crisis, and the democratic transformation of the conditions of power appropriate the dialogue between all the political circles that feel responsible for the future. Handling the crisis and creating a multiparty system is only possible with the agreement of the democratic forces. It presupposes that mutual objectives and aims are taken into account, that all participants are willing to make an agreement, and it necessitates trust and self-restraint. The fate of the nation can be improved by respecting the requirements of the constitution and firmly rejecting violence. It is in our mutual interest that social conflicts are solved according to the generally agreed norms of European political culture: with public consent. The transition from a single-party system to representational democracy and constitutional government can only be realized by free elections. Well-functioning representative bodies and a firm, consistent government that is trusted by the people are needed to stop the worsening social and economic crisis. The peaceful political transition and the relief of aggravated economic and social tension can only be realized by mutual agreement. An array of historical examples warn us that common problems can only be solved with consensus. All civil organizations and movements have to take part side by side in the hard and contradictory process of transition. On the basis of these facts and conditions, organizations of the Opposition Roundtable, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the Left Wing Alternative Union; the Patriotic People's Front; the Hungarian Democratic Youth Association; the Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists; the National Council of Hungarian Women; the joint delegation of the Ferenc Münnich Society; and the National Council of Trade Unions express their wish to commence substantial political negotiations. The equal negotiators accept the following governing principles for the talks:—the basis of power is the sovereignty of the people; none of the political forces can monopolize it and declare themselves the sole repository of the people's will, and none can aspire to unconstitutionally curtail political rights;—the will of the public has to be expressed without preceding limitations, in the course of free elections, the result of which is binding for everyone, and from which no political organization that complies with the requirements of the constitution can be excluded;—handling the crisis, ensuring a democratic transition and resolving political conflicts is only possible in a peaceful way, avoiding violence; none of the civil organizations can have direct control over military forces;—an important condition of the successful and constructive political negotiations is that the nation and [the parties'] interests are considered and respected; a further condition is mutual and anticipatory confidence;—only mutually acceptable conditions can be the basis of co-operation and agreement;—when determining the participants of negotiations and their legal standing, exclusion of a political nature is unacceptable, although the functioning of the negotiation process must be considered;—the objective of negotiations is the formation of political agreements that can be accompanied by the necessary government measures and bills, together with the deadline for their realization; the negotiations themselves, however, do not directly exercise functions of constitutional law;—during the course of negotiations the parties refrain from all unilateral steps that would obliterate the goal of negotiations; legislation cannot precede political agreement;—all negotiating partners will have the political agreements accepted in their own organizations, and represent them in public as well, while assisting the enforcement of the agreements by every possible political means. II. Three parties take part in the political conciliation talks, with the intent of reaching political agreements. a) The Opposition Roundtable (Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Friendship Society; Alliance of Young Democrats; Independent Smallholders' and Farmers' Civic Party; Christian Democratic People's Party; Hungarian Democratic Forum; Hungarian People's Party; Hungarian Social Democratic Party; Alliance of Free Democrats; and the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions as observer); b) Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party; c) The following civil organizations and movements: Left Wing Alternative Union; the Patriotic People's Front; Hungarian Democratic Youth Association; the Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists; the National Council of Hungarian Women; the Ferenc Münnich Society and the National Council of Trade Unions. All three negotiating partners are endowed with equal rights in forming a consensus. A speaker represents each of the three parties, who [will] express the opinions of the

negotiating parties. Civil associations and movements listed under point c) above, whose participation in substantial negotiations was agreed by the Opposition Roundtable as a compromise during preparatory talks, do express that they support the intention of both the Hungarian Social Workers' Party and the Opposition Roundtable to conduct a constructive dialogue and reach an agreement. They intend to take an active part in the negotiation process. The Opposition Roundtable determines the number and composition of their delegates. Civil associations and movements listed under point c) above decide among themselves about the method of reconciliation and the method of joint representation of their disputable issues.

1. Representatives of the participating organizations are endowed with a written mandate, which contains their right to make agreements. They present their mandate to the president of the plenary session.
2. The fourth side of the negotiating table can be reserved for observers. Observers have the right to submit their proposed remarks in writing to the president of the meeting, who informs the negotiating parties about the observation.
3. The negotiating parties put on the agenda of conciliatory talks the following issues:
 - defining the rules and principles of realizing a democratic political transition;
 - strategic tasks for overcoming the impending economic and social crisis.Final definition of individual issues, based on specific interests, is the task of substantial negotiations.

1. The statutes and working order of the political conciliatory talks are as follows:
 - a) Substantial negotiations are conducted in plenary sessions and in committees. The opening plenary session is scheduled on 13 June 1989 (Tuesday) in the Hunters' Hall of Parliament. The Speaker of the House presides over the whole meeting. Representatives of all three negotiating parties are given equal time to speak. In the course of the opening plenary session, negotiating partners issue a declaration of intent. Then they form working committees.
 - b) Agreements are prepared by working committees, according to specific issues on the agenda. Statutes of the plenary session logically refer to committee sessions as well. Working committees can form sub-committees—with the participation of experts. Preparing bills for legislation must involve governmental bodies as well. In the course of political conciliatory talks, some propositions may be opened to public debate. Final documents are ratified by the plenary session. Propositions of the working committees can only be submitted to the plenary session when heads of delegations have signed them. The approved documents are signed by the heads of the delegations who then take care of their publication. Every session is recorded in the minutes, which have to be publicized in case the negotiations are interrupted.
 - c) Coming to an agreement is our mutual interest, based on the principle of consensus. Should discord persist in a particular detail, consensus can be reached nevertheless, provided that the dissenting negotiating partner admits that it does not concern the general principle of the agreement.
 - d) Plenary sessions are open to the press. Working committees, however, will operate behind closed doors. It has to be assured that [the public] receives regular and substantial information about the negotiation process. From time to time, negotiating parties will issue a joint communiqué to the Hungarian Telegraphic Agency. Separate statements can only be issued if negotiations break off or a common declaration cannot be agreed on. Nevertheless, this does not concern the right of the parties to express their opinions about the content of certain issues on the agenda.
 - e) The parties think it necessary that expenses of the negotiations are covered by the state budget. Handling of documents, photocopying, postage, the costs of organizing meetings, and the wages of possible experts are included in the expenses.

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Secretary of the Central Committee
Representing the Opposition Roundtable: Dr. Zsolt Zétényi
16 Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Friendship Society
Dr. László Kövér
Alliance of Young Democrats
Péter Hardi
Independent Smallholders' and Farmers' Civic Party
György Szokolczai
Christian Democratic Party
Dr. László Sólyom
Hungarian Democratic Forum
Csaba Varga
Hungarian People's Party
Tibor Baranyai
Hungarian Social Democratic Party
Dr. Péter Tölgyessy
Alliance of Free Democrats
Imre Kerényi
Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions, as observer
Representing the Left Wing Alternative Union; the Patriotic People's Front; the Hungarian Democratic Youth Association; the Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists; the National Council of Hungarian Women; the joint delegation of the Ferenc Münnich Society and the National Council of Trade Unions: Csaba Kemény
Left Wing Alternative Union
Dr. István Kukorelli
People's Patriotic Front
Ferenc Gyurcsány
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Association
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Ferenc Münnich Society
Mrs. Kósa & Dr. Magda Kovács
National Council of
Trade Unions
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Roundtable. Political Portraits. Ed. and interviews by Anna Richter] (Budapest: Ötlet
Kft, 1990), pp. 294-300. Translated by Csaba Farkas.]
16 Biographies of all
representatives of the tripartite negotiations were published in the briefing book of
the conference; "Political Transition in Hungary, 1989-1990," held in Budapest in June
1999. A copy is accessible for researchers at the CWIHP and National Security Archive
(<http://nsarchive.org>).