

June 14, 1953

**Transcript of Conversation among the Hungarian
Workers' Party Delegation in Moscow**

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Summary:

Following discussions with the Soviet leadership in Moscow, the Hungarian delegation discusses reforms to be implemented in Hungary.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Transcript of the Conversation among the Hungarian Workers' Party Delegation in Moscow on June 14, 1953

Present are: Comrades Rakosi, Nagy, Dobi, Gerő, Hegedus, Hidas, Foldvari, Szalai.

Com. Rakosi: The observations of the Soviet Comrades are correct. I recommend the discussion of the questions in the following order:

1. Party,
2. The mistakes of the State leadership,
3. Economic projects.

The leadership must become collective. There should not be two kinds of leaders: plenipotentiary and non-plenipotentiary, official leadership and restricted leading circles. There is no need for three leading political organs (KV, PB, Secretary). The Secretary as a politically leading organ must be abolished. The PB must be made the real political leading organ, and its number [that of its members] must be decreased.

Comr. Nagy: We must start from what Comrade Molotov said; that there are mistakes in the Party's policy. The mistakes in different fields and the methods to correct them must be determined. I agree with Comrade Rakosi regarding the order [of discussion].

Comr. Gerő: It is logically correct to start with admitting the mistakes made in the Party's policy. It must be shown how we want to correct the mistakes, and from there the organizational instructions must be derived.

Comr. Dobi: He mentions a couple examples for extreme actions: in the village where he went to school, the teacher collected a couple pictures of him [of Dobi], and he placed them in the classroom next to those of Lenin, Stalin, and Rakosi. People from the MNDSZ [Hungarian National Students' Federation] visited the school and said "what is Dobi's picture doing on the wall". At the district they said the pictures could stay for now, but the case is instructive, nevertheless. Many Party members think that they can kick the other person if s/he is not a Party member.

[The] other example: The reapers complained that the machine park did not fulfill the contract's conditions. When Comrade Dobi advised them to demand the fulfillment of the contract bravely, the leaders of the machine park cursed his mother and said we will take care of Do bi. The director of the park was dismissed. Party secretaries sometimes decide on their own who is a kulak and who is not. For the benefit of organizing the collectives, kulaks qualify as middle peasants. Some are labeled as kulaks out of revenge. Comrade Dobi's housekeeper was labeled as a kulak even though his/her father had 9 hold land. They wanted to list Representative Ferenc Szabo as a kulak. He had a pub and 12 holds of land.

Com. Rakosi: We generally consider Comrade Dobi's warnings. Ferenc Szabo has been a pub owner and a horse-trader [on black market]. Not a good element [suspicious figure].

It is correct to start with the criticism of the political line. These questions must be brought before the Party. It must be reported to the Party which were the mistakes that were I committed.

[The] most significant one was to neglect the cadre supply of the Party. It was a mistake that we kept many Comrades at school. The new, young Comrades must be given independent work. They must be viewed as equal colleagues; it is not necessary to pamper them. The bad relationship with the workers must be changed. The workers' harassment must be stopped. The bossy [Party] Secretary in the counties, Council Presidents, etc. are following the example of the bossy Party Secretary. We must bravely tell the people what kind of mistakes we made, and we must tell them that there will be thorough changes.

Com Foldvari: The relationship between the Party and the masses must be brought up. We have lost the lively contact with the masses. Our functionaries oftentimes do not represent the interest of the working masses.

Com. Gerő: We did not only have bossiness, but there was also personal leadership instead of collective leadership. Questions that hurt the masses did not reach up to the leadership of the Party. The Party leadership dealt with big questions too, but in spite of this it worked without a perspective [sic]. The perspective was whether the

industrial production should grow with 26 or 13%; whether 7 or 10% should be the growth in the collective sector of agriculture. These are big questions, but separated from the whole development of the people's democracy, these are minor questions after all.

We made [the] most decisive mistake by neglecting the development of cadres. For the real leaders to develop, 10-15 years are necessary. But at the time of such big changes as occurred in our country, too, the cadres grow more quickly.

It is a rather important warning from the Soviet Comrades that young people should not be viewed as school children. It is the old generation's fault that they did not produce capable young cadres. We aimed at too few cadres. We promoted 2-3 people in leading positions. If 1-2 of them did not work out for some reason, we could start all over. This is our most serious mistake, because each individual mistake is easy to correct, if there are capable people. The Party was led by 3-4 Comrades. We had serious achievements, but we also made serious mistakes. 3-4 people do not constitute the Party nor the State. People are not made of iron; they get old. Not only did the Center lack collective leadership, but so did the counties. (Comrade Rakosi's interruption: 3-4 people led in the Center, in the county only 1.)

[The] other question is the neglect of the ideology of democracy, the violation of laws, abuses of power. It is possible to dictate too, but according to the law. Tough leadership is correct, if it is lawful. Though we introduced incorrect decrees in this regard as well. For instance, our regulation that the worker cannot leave his/her working place is not right. It is not correct to bring the workers to the jury because they had left their working place. The large number of fees against the workers is not right. We got on this road because of over-intensified industrial development. It is not possible to follow such an untrusting policy towards the entire working class.

The composition of the Party leadership's personnel was not adequate. If certain less experienced and less advanced Comrades make speeches, other Comrades treat them condescendingly. In this manner, we disturb the development of young Comrades. I tried to fight against these kinds of things, but not with full success. Any Comrade that is worthy of being elected for a leading organ must be treated with respect. This kind of respect and equality does not exist at home. This deficiency does not only exist in the leadership, but everywhere from the top to the bottom. If there were a large number of independently thinking people, the Party could move mountains.

Com. Nagy: Agrees with Comrade Gerő.

One of the basic questions of leadership is criticism, self-criticism. There are big deficiencies in this area too. Yesterday's discussion showed what really tough, deep Bolshevik criticism is like. We are behind in this area; this is also partially a result of bossiness.

The neglect of ideological work in the Party--this is also a question that we have to bring up, even though the Soviet Comrades did not talk about it.

Isolation from the masses must be specifically emphasized as a significant mistake.

One of the virtues of the Communist[s] is modesty. [The] Comrades in leading positions do not provide a good example. Sarcasm and underestimation of the ones with less knowledge can be observed.

Com. Hegedus: A major mistake made by the Secretary was not uncovering these serious mistakes themselves, but the Soviet Comrades had to notice them.

The work of certain members of the Secretary was seldom criticized. (I.e. that of Comrades Gerő and Farkas) Opinions developed in the Party according to which certain Comrades must not be criticized. (Com. Norm warned him that Comrade Farkas was "offended" if he was criticized.) This practice was incorrect.

It was a mistake to treat certain questions as taboos. For instance the question of wool, [and the] A VH.

In the educational work of the Party, they do not make sufficient effort to educate in a Communist spirit, for the sacrificial service of the people. Instruction in the Party schools, which is aimed at teaching Marxist principles, is not supplemented by sufficient educational work.

It was a fundamental mistake in relation with the cadres that we did not look at the

cadres properly. The leading organs usually made decisions based on paperwork. In [the] Soviet Union, the leading organs decide about the cadres by inviting them to their meeting and getting to know them.

I did not feel like I was an equal member of the Secretary regarding my rights. Nor regarding my obligations.

Com. Gerő: Your fault was that you felt you were not responsible for the entire country, but only for the agricultural sector and even only for a part of that.

Com. Hegedus: Bringing up the mistakes in an entirely open manner results in political strengthening.

Com. Hidas: I did not feel either that I was responsible for the leadership of the entire Party. At the Secretarial meeting only Comrades Gerő, Farkas, and Comrade Revai gave speeches; the others only commented on minor questions. One of the main reasons for this was that I myself did not pay enough attention to the questions that came before the Secretariat, and neither did certain other Comrades.

The Central Leadership does not fulfill its purpose. Even though it is a leading political organ, its job is mostly formal, the PB and the Secretariat work instead of it.

Our methods are too mechanical.

Com. Rakosi: We were not patient enough with the young Comrades, and we declared them incapable too quickly. We were not attentive enough towards them; several Comrades did not pay attention to their speeches at the meetings of the PB or the Secretariat. Prestige was overly respected. If they criticized older Comrades, the atmosphere became tense immediately.

The Party and the State apparatus, the relationship of the Party and the masses

Com. Rakosi: We lost sight of the interest of the masses, especially their economic interests. The leaders of the Party felt like they were above the masses, and this policy spread all across the Party. The fast pace of development turned to the disadvantage of the people's quality of life. We often used administrative means. The police are not liked in the villages. There are [too] many arrests. This must be announced to the people honestly, and also that we will correct the mistakes in this area.

Com. Dobi: There are many "industrialists" amongst [the] Party secretaries. Their wives are not working; they do not like this in the villages.

Com. Nagy: There have been serious mistakes made in the Councils: violations, harassment, rigid treatment. The methods of tax collection are also too aggressive.

The state apparatus is too big and bureaucratic.

Com. Gerő: The reason for the aggressive steps oftentimes is that we give tasks to our organizations that they cannot solve with normal methods. Thus, this question is also related to the extreme speed of development. The lower organs try to fulfill the extreme demands with aggressive methods. A gap developed between the Party and the people.

The question of justice. The correct [procedure] would be for any state organ to honestly admit and correct their mistakes if they discovered them. This is not what happens at home. For instance, the AVH often does not release those that were incorrectly arrested if there is no evidence against them, but they intern them for years. This situation is intolerable in a state with laws. The system of internment must be entirely abolished. The workers must be sure that if they are arrested by mistake, their case will be investigated, it will be clarified within a short period of time, s/he will be released and rehabilitated. [The] police, too, arrests people for minor reasons. The courts sentence them for minor things for a few months, and, as supplementary punishment, they deprive them of their political rights for 3 years. Thus we turn these people into enemies. We receive very few signals about the troubles and abuses in different areas from the ABK [State Control Center].

The state apparatus is too big. Especially its armed sector. The system introduced in relation to the Presidency of the Ministerial Council did not work out. It decreased the

responsibilities of the ministers. It slowed down the processing of state affairs. It increased bureaucracy in the entire State leadership.

Com. Szalai: The local base-organs of the Party and the Councils passively view the power abuses and transgressions against [the] people. [The] Party's organs and the Councils must be educated to defend the people from power abuses. Those who abuse their power must be made responsible strictly. It must insured that they bring complaints against abuses of power and violations at the proper organs. These complaints must be taken rather seriously. We have to create the legal organization that the Constitution obliges us to Set up.

Com. Hegedus: Today even those are afraid who have no reason to be, because there is much unreasonable harassment. The directors of the state farms are disturbed by the police in the rudest ways. Such individuals at the police must be made responsible. During collection of levies in kind, there is a danger that the local Council transfers the amount not provided by some farmers to other working peasants who had already submitted their portion, just so that the town thus fulfills its plans. The present system must be reexamined.

Com. Rakosi: The justice departments are already working on the drafts of the amnesty decree. It is not necessary to wait until August 20 with introducing the decrees regarding the amnesty. Regarding those deported, the suggestion is to terminate the prescribed location of their habitat, but they should not be able to go wherever a permit for settlement is necessary (only in very exceptional cases).

Com. Gerő: The [records of] cases where people had been sentenced for minor reasons should be erased, so that these people would not have to live with a black mark.

Overly strained pace of development. The mistakes in planning

Com. Rakosi: The Russian Comrades pointed to the mistakes in this field correctly too. We neglected the population's needs too much. The whole plan must be reexamined. Whatever is useless or not crucial must be left behind, and more goods must be provided for the public.

The development of agricultural collectives must be slowed down. Even this fall's development must be moderated.

More support must be given to the individually farming peasants. For instance fertilizer, cheaper seeds, male animal-husbandry [sic]. The regulations regarding mechanized production must be reexamined.

Com. Nagy: The pace of development [in] the agricultural field and in the collectives' movement must be decreased.

Investments in agriculture must be increased.

Safety must be created for the individually farming peasants. Specific regulations must be written to increase the incentives for individually farming peasants to increase their production. Free trade must be insured and production of [consumption] goods must be increased.

We should not strive for autarky by all means; this should also be kept in mind as the plans are reexamined.

Com. Gerő: What kind of mistakes did we make in our plans?

1. The rate of development after 1950 was too high. We even developed industrial branches for which the pre-conditions do not exist, or merely exist in the country.
2. The shift of the balance between sectors "A" and "B". The industrial production increases with 11.5% in 1953. Sector "A" with 20%, sector "B" with 5-7%. Nothing justifies this shift. Sectors "A" and "B" must be brought closer together.
3. We insisted rigidly on the Marxist hypothesis that heavy industry must precede the development of light industry. We have to consider the existence of the Soviet Union and that of people's democracies as we practically investigate this question.
4. The development of the industry of raw materials. The pace in iron-metallurgy

must be decreased, and its development must be conditioned on a few basic points of view:

a) [The] exploitation of the capacity of [the] machine park. The existing machine park must be taken into consideration, but even the machine park does not need to be developed further without thorough consideration. (We cannot supply it with steel.)

b) [The] raw materials at our disposal. We can solve the coke question in perspective [?]. (With coal from Komlo and Pees.) We are in a worse position with regards to iron ore production. Ironworks must not be built based on ores that will be provided somehow in the future. They must be built when the ore is already provided.

The construction of one of the two great ironworks will probably have to stop. All the political and economic aspects must be considered, but we must not let ourselves be influenced by questions of prestige.

Oil drills. It must be reexamined, and the investments must be decreased.

Electrical machinery. It must be developed. Ancient Hungarian industry. It had good achievements even in comparison with the world market.

5. Investments in general. To be looked at from the point of view of quick results. [The] people should feel that there are quick results.

[The] underground metro would cost 2880 million. If we had used what we invested in it for the production of buses and trolleys, Budapest's transportation would be much better. The investment must be either conserved [stopped indefinitely] or it must be built very slowly.

Regarding [the] constructions in chemical industry, it must be reconsidered whether it is worth importing gas from Rumania.

The construction of certain military factories must be stopped.

6. Construction of houses. Houses must be built primarily in Budapest and the counties' capitals:

a) Budapest must be given a new dress (appearance),

b) new city quarter must be built in the city.

7. Agriculture. We are behind in output and quality in the area of animal husbandry. We went to the extreme with increasing the State's animal stock. There are 1.5 million pigs owned by the state, more than 30% of the entire stock. It would have been better to leave a portion of the pigs and the crops with the peasants. Personnel questions.

The following changes must be implemented in the Party line:

1. Only one political leading body, the Political Committee (its name might have to be changed), needs to be maintained besides the Central Leadership; the Secretariat as a political leading organ must be terminated.

2. The number of the members of the political leading body must be established at 13-15.

3. A Secretariat with 5-7 members must be organized. [The] Secretariat is an executive organ; it deals with questions of the Party.

4. The title of First Secretary should be suggested to be abolished.

The following changes must be implemented on the State level:

1. Certain Ministries must merge according to the following pattern

the Ministry of Domestic and that of Foreign Trade

the Ministry of Land-management and that of State Farms

the Ministry of Food supplies and that of [Agricultural] Levy

the Ministry of Transportation and Postal Services

the Ministry of General Machine Industry and Middle-sized Machine Industry

the Ministries of Mining, of Metallurgy, and of Chemical Industry

the Ministries of Construction Management and that of Construction Material Industry

the Ministry of Light Industry and that of Local Industries

the Ministries of Mass-education, of Higher-education and the Cultural Ministry

The following Ministries will remain unchanged:

Ministry of the Interior

Foreign Ministry

Defense Ministry

Ministry of Justice

Finance Ministry

To be elevated to a Ministerial level:

[the] State Planning Department

[the] State Control Center

2. The present system of the deputies of the Ministerial Council must be terminated.

The first two deputies of the President of [the] Ministerial Council should come from the specialized Ministers.

3. The present apparatus of the deputies of the Ministerial Council must be significantly downsized and merged with the staff of the Ministerial Council's President.

For the direction of the staff of the Ministerial Council's President and for the supervision of the organs directly under the Ministerial Council, a deputy of the Ministerial Council's President who has no portfolio should be selected.

4. The Ministerial Council's President, his two Chief Deputies, and one Deputy make decisions about certain relevant questions together.

Personnel suggestions

For the Political Committee of the Party:

Matyas Rakosi

Imre Nagy

Ernő Gerő

Andras Hegedus

Istvan Hidas

Mihaly Farkas

Jozsef Revai

Istvan Kristof

Arpad Hazi

Karoly Kiss

Laszlo Piros

[Rudolf] Foldvari

[Lajos] Acs

[Bela] Szalai

Suggestion for the members of the Ministerial Council □□□

□□□□

The Ministerial Council's President

Imre Nagy □□□

□□□□

" " 's first deputy, M of Interior

Ernő Gerő □□□

□□□□

" " 's second deputy, M of Landm.

Andras Hegedus □□□

□□□□

" " 's deputy, Foreign Minister

[Janos] Boldoczki 0000

0000

of Defense

[Farkas] Mihaly 0000

0000

of Justice

F[erenc] Erdei 0000

0000

of Health

[Sandor] Zsoldos 0000

0000

of Finance

K[aroly] Olt 0000

0000

of Domestic and Foreign Trade

[Jozsef] Bognar 0000

0000

of Food and Acquisition

I[van] Altomare 0000

0000

of Transportation and Postal Services

[Lajos] Bebrits 0000

0000

of Machine Industry

[handwritten] [Istvan] Kossa 0000

0000

of Heavy Industry

I[stvan] Hidas 0000

0000

of Construction

L[ajos] Szijarto 0000

0000

of Light and Local Industry

A[rpad] Kis[s] 0000

0000

of Mass-Education, Higher-level Educ., Cult.,

[handwritten] [Jozsef] Darvas 0000

0000

President of Planning Dept.

B[ela] Szalai 0000

0000

State Control Min.

Ar[pad] Hazi 00 00