

July 24, 1989

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Hungarian Socialist
Workers' Party [HSWP] CC Political Executive
Committee**

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Summary:

Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party [HSWP] CC Political Executive Committee discussing whether to hold elections in September or wait until November

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(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 some 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 controversial issues. So, with a flexible negotiating strategy, namely that we give in to certain demands but stand our ground firmly in other issues, we cannot 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 in late autumn. 19 Three or four weeks, that's all we have. On the other hand, this more or less open, hesitant, obstructive behavior is physically impeding the process of calling elections. That's why we have to come to a 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 either we accept the fact that we cannot make a compromise in this case, while emphasizing that the ongoing negotiation process should not be jeopardized-it is another question, though, whether the danger holds only for the elections-or, alternatively, we come up with overt reasoning and publicize in due time what the rationale is behind advancing the date of elections. In the latter case we should look to make compromises on other issues instead of this one. Undoubtedly, we jeopardize 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 advance the elections? I believe that even if we called elections for 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 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 session 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. As long as there is no decision on this issue, we cannot follow a clear and unequivocal line in the negotiations. I can imagine that we might lose this, 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. Under one condition, that is if they pass these fundamental laws in September, then the November elections are 100 percent to 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 three. Three would be most expedient, though.

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

It is definite 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, the HSWP cannot take 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, making known and objectively presenting the opposing views. In the present state of negotiations it is an illusion that in these questions- whether it be the party law or election law-a total agreement and final consensus can be reached. An illusion. Possibly we should reduce the number of points that induce confrontation-and there are a lot, at the moment. Just to mention one example: so far, when it came to the party law, the opposition has put in the minutes at every single meeting that the HSWP 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 can't tell when they might take a U-turn on this issue. They will only relinquish if there is a final deadline, by 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 HSWP are unable to do this.
(...)