

June 16, 1953

**Transcript of the Conversation between the Soviet
Leadership and the Hungarian Workers' Party
Delegation in Moscow**

Citation:

"Transcript of the Conversation between the Soviet Leadership and the Hungarian Workers' Party Delegation in Moscow", June 16, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Hungarian Central Archives. 276j 102165. oe. e. Typed revision. Published by Gyorgy T Varga in Multunk, 2-3(1992), pp. 234-269. Translated by Monika Borbely.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/134817>

Summary:

Discussion of the reorganization of the Hungarian government and various reforms following Stalin's death.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Transcript of the Conversation between the Soviet Leadership and the Hungarian Workers' Party Delegation in Moscow on June 16, 1953, 2-3:30 PM

Present are: Comrades Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan, Kiselev, and Boikov, and Comrades Rakosi, I. Nagy, Dobi, Gerő, Hegedus, Hidas, Foldvari, and Szalai

[The] Soviet Comrades had received the attached document prepared by the delegation in advance.

Comr. Rakosi: Made oral explanatory comments about the document, and asked questions. When he asked whether the President of the Ministerial Council and his deputies should form a separate body (Presidency), Comrades Malenkov and Beria answered that there was no need for such an organ. The country is small; the Ministerial Council should solve the questions.

In response to the question about the size of the army and the pace of development for the military industry, Comrade Malenkov answered the following: "First you should consider the question thoroughly, and then make recommendations, express your opinion". Comrade Malenkov's answer to the question as to where the radio's work should be directed from was "for most part and primarily the Party deals with it in the SU". However, the Academy of Sciences is primarily directed by the Ministerial Council. The Ministerial Council accepts [the] scientific plans. On the other hand, the Party should deal with the cadres.

Comr. Molotov: I heard bad news about the ideological work in Hungary. Comrade Revai is everything in one person. He makes speeches in the name of the Party KV, makes orders in the name of the Party. He has a monopoly in the field of ideology. If Karl Marx was alive, even he himself would not accept such a task. Direction of all the ideological work is not the task of one Comrade, but the task of the entire Party leadership. Comrade Revai has not appeared as a Marxist; his leadership is not thorough enough. There is oppression in ideological questions. The situation is similar in relation to the Academy.

Com. I. Nagy: Comrade Molotov is absolutely right. During the preparation of the document it came up that we should deal with the question of the defects that exist in the area of ideological work, but later this question was left out. The Political Committee established two committees. One of them a longer time ago, the other one for the processing of the materials from the XIX congress. Comrade Rakosi lead both committees. One of the Committees never assembled, the other one had a meeting once last November, and even that was a formal meeting. This is great shame. We never discussed ideological questions in the Party. The war of opinions never raged, without which the ideological work cannot make progress. This needs to be discussed in the document indeed.

Com. Beria: The document means a step forward. But the document must be made more concrete and it must be supplemented. The question of industrialization must be dealt with in a separate section. Numbers must be included also in the section that deals with industrialization and the over-intensified investments, because it can not be understood without them. It must be expressed what the projections are according to the current plans, and to what extent we will change those. Agriculture must also have its separate section in the statute. Numbers must be included here as well. It must be clarified what "fallow" -s are, how these fallow lands appeared, and what the reason is for such an abundance of "fallow".

The productivity of the collectives must also be discussed. It must be expressed honestly that in our country the yield of the land is less in the collectives than on the land of individually working middle peasants. It must be stated that the speed of collectivization will be decreased. The peasants' flight into the cities - important question. It must be determined what causes this and how the mistake will have to be corrected. The question of the collectives' debt must be examined. There is a suggestion to terminate the kulak list. This is not correct. The question is not the kulak list. The important issue is that it must be determined correctly who is a kulak.

The question of lawfulness is mentioned in too vague a form. This is little. What happened in the past needs to be stated, that court procedure was initiated against 1 200 000 people in 3 and 1/4 years, and during the same period 1 150 000 people

were persecuted for violations [not criminal acts]. The people will understand it better if the numbers are in the document. It also must be shown, how the unlawfulness needs to be corrected.

It must be discussed openly that people of Hungarian nationality were not promoted enough to responsible positions. Not formally, but in effect. This situation must be changed. This must be in the statute also.

It must also be discussed in the statute: it was incorrect for Comrade Rakosi to interfere with running the AVH and the Ministry of the Interior, and the way he interfered was incorrect; he gave directions for investigations, for the arrest of certain people and for their physical punishment. If we do not admit this in the statute, Comrade Rakosi could repeat the mistake, or anyone else could do something similar. Such methods can have rather serious consequences, and we would never learn the truth.

It also must be stated that the practice of unifying the functions of the Party Secretary and the President of the Ministerial Council in one person was incorrect.

As a consequence, Comrade Rakosi thought he could do anything. In reality, he could not do a thorough job in either place. What Comrade Molotov said regarding the mistakes in the field of ideology also points to this.

The questions that Comrade Rakosi raised here are artificial questions. The Ministerial Council should deal with everything that happens in the country. The Party should help the successful solution of the tasks that it gave to the Ministerial Council. Nobody can prescribe in detail where, how, in what area, which organ should do what. This depends on people's abilities and capabilities.

Comr. Molotov: Agrees with Comrade Beria. He has a couple supplementary comments.

Regarding the ideological work: criticism must be further developed. Criticism --self-criticism must also be discussed in the document. What the document contains regarding economic policy is correct; a few things, however, are worded coarsely. For instance, where the moderation of the industrial development is mentioned, it should also be mentioned that this is done so that the quality of life for the population would rise.

The situation of the village and the population. This is the weakest part of the document. It must be stated that the agricultural sector has been neglected, and in the future great attention must be paid to the improvement of agriculture. Dispersion of collectives should not be feared where they were established by administrative methods. Collectivization needs not be rushed; it is important to have good relations with the working peasants.

The working class is not mentioned in [the] document. Where we discuss in the document that over-intensified industrialization had a negative effect on the quality of life for the population, it also must be stated that [it had a negative effect] primarily on that of the working class. We must not be afraid to show: the quality of life of the working class declined in the last few years in Hungary. When we observe that major investments must be reduced [and] certain constructions must be stopped, it also must be added that new opportunities for work must be created for the workers. With regards to the house constructions, it must be stated that we are primarily building houses for the workers.

The falsification of the quality of products and the raise in price that accompanies it must be condemned in the statute as impermissible.

Com. Dobi: I would not agree with the dissolution of the collectives. If we execute the regulations suggested by the Soviet Comrades, the collectives will become stronger.

Com. Molotov: The collectives do not have to be dissolved, but if they want to disperse at their own initiative, that must not be stopped.

Com. Mikoyan: The section regarding the quality of life of the population is not convincing enough. It must be included in the statute that the flow of products in small business decreased last year.

Com. Khrushchev: Agrees with Comrade Beria's and Comrade Molotov's comments. There is no need for a Secretariat with 7 members. A Secretariat with 7 members besides a Political Committee with 12 members, for instance, would mean that the

Secretariat is in majority in the Political Committee. Though not all the members of the Secretariat must be PB members. It would be better to organize a Secretariat with 3 members.

Com. Beria, Malenkov: The Secretariat could have 3-4 members. There should not be a Presidency but a Political Committee, which should have 9 members and 2 substitute members. The members of the Secretariat could be the members of the PB at the same time, but it's not necessarily essential for all the members of the Secretariat to be members of the PB.

Com. Malenkov: The observations of the Comrades who spoke before me were correct. If there is no objection on the side of the Hungarian Comrades, the above observations should be included in the document.

Com. Imre Nagy: [The] kulak list is the basis of the atrocities against the kulaks. [The] first task is to determine who are kulaks, indeed, but the kulak list must be terminated.

Com. Beria.: The current list must be terminated, but who are kulaks are must be determined.

Com. Imre Nagy: We have understood the criticism. [The] document does not express the tasks [sic].

Com. Malenkov.: The document is not bad as a start. The Soviet Comrades want to help to show in what direction it should be developed further.

Com. Imre Nagy: We [will] work with all our powers to realize what had been stated in the statute. We will not stop half way on the road, and we will not establish semi-regulations. Very much depends on how much Comrade Rakosi will help to correct the mistakes. Whether he will uncover the mistakes with sincere self-criticism, and whether he will strive to correct these.

Com. Beria.: It does not depend on one person only, but on the entire leadership. And if Comrade Rakosi does not help to correct the mistakes, he will demolish himself.

Com. Imre Nagy: The connection with the Central Leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has not been as direct for the last few years as it was 3-4 years ago.

Com. Beria: Connection had existed before and it exists now, but it was not the proper kind of relationship, and this lead to negative consequences. Celebratory meetings and applause constituted the relationship. In [the] future, we will create a new kind of relationship; a more responsible and serious relationship. We will notify the Comrades about this.

Com. Malenkov: The Comrades will see; this relationship will be entirely different from that of the past.

Com. Rakosi: I am very sorry that I had not received this kind of lesson before, and I had not been given this kind of a mirror to face myself. Regarding the future, I can assure the Comrades that I will do all in order to correct the mistakes. However, correction of the mistakes does not depend on one person, but on the entire Party Leadership.

Com. Malenkov.: The meeting has shown that the Hungarian Comrades, who came to us for advice, have agreed with the recommendations of the Soviet Comrades. We are not forcing on Hungary the regulations that were developed here, but they satisfy Hungary's needs.

A few specific questions still need to be discussed.

He asks whether Comrade Farkas is studying at present, or he is somewhat familiar with military science.

Comrades Rakosi and Gerő: Yes, Comrade Farkas studies seriously; this is also the opinion of the Soviet advisor Comrade.

Com. Bulganin: Does Comrade Farkas have some kind of an academic degree?

Comrades Rakosi and Gerő: Comrade Farkas has no academic degrees.

Comrades Malenkov and Bulganin: They recommend that Comrade Farkas, who is talented and faithful to the Party's cause, be sent to the Soviet Union for 1-2 years to the military academy, because the knowledge that the Academy gives is necessary.

Comrade Bata, or some other Comrade could be appointed as Defense Minister.^[1] There should be two lecturers at the meeting of the Central Leadership: Comrades Rakosi and Nagy.

Com. Malenkov: According to Comrade Kiselev's report, the USA's Ambassador to Hungary suggested to Comrades Erik Molnar and Andor Berei at the reception given by the British Embassy that one member of the Hungarian Government (they mentioned Comrade Erik Molnar and, according to Comrade Kiselev's report, Comrade Rakosi) should meet a member of the American Government, possibly with President Eisenhower, and that they should discuss the questions currently debated between Hungary and the USA.

Comr. Rakosi: I was not aware that my name came up, nor that according to the American Ambassador Eisenhower would also participate in the discussions. When I found out about this precedent, I immediately gave orders to notify Comrade Kiselev.

Com. Malenkov, Beria: Comrade Rakosi made two mistakes in this case:

1. He did not make sure that the members of the Political Committee are notified about the USA's attempts, and he did not discuss the question with the members of the party's leadership. This is an example of individual leadership, of the lack of collective leadership. These kinds of methods are impermissible. Great mistakes can be made with these kinds of methods. Why does it depend on the Foreign Minister whom he sends reports to about these kinds of precedents? The Ambassador of the USA discussed this question with four people, and the members of the PB do not know about it. Order must be created, for Hungary could be lost with methods like these.

2. Comrade Rakosi intended to bring the American's suggestion before the Government. It is improper procedure for the Hungarian Government to deal with a statement that the American Ambassador made at a banquet. The members of the PB should not say in the future that they did not know this, they did not know that. They themselves should also demand that they should be notified about everything, because they are all responsible for the country together.

Com. Beria: Stubbornness is evident from the Hungarian Comrades' attitude--primarily from that of Comrade Rakosi--regarding the reexamination of the Peter case. They sent four Comrades to Hungary to investigate the case. Comrade Rakosi had commenced these Comrades for a meeting before his departure for Moscow.

(Comrade Rakosi: They came; I did not invite them.) The discussions lasted for two hours. Of that, the Soviet Comrades talked for 12 minutes, Comrade Rakosi talked for 1 [hour] 50 minutes, and he lectured to them about how they should conduct the investigation. If we had made mistakes, those must be revealed, because stubbornness leads to even worse mistakes.

Com. Malenkov: There is no need to certify the statute. The Hungarian Comrades will be able to work out the statute recommendations and will be strong enough to correct the mistakes.

[The document prepared by the MDP's delegation]

The delegation of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party and of the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic's observes that the leadership of the Party, headed by Comrade Mihaly Rakosi, has made serious mistakes in defining its political goals and in its practical work for the last few years which caused significant difficulties in the national economy, damaged the relationship between the Party, the State, and the working masses, and negatively influenced the evolution of the people's quality of life. The correction of all these mistakes has become an urgent necessity.

Personal leadership has developed in the Party's leadership instead of a system of collective leadership, for which Comrade Rakosi is primarily responsible. [Instead of] collective leadership, personal leadership developed, and was combined with bossiness that was damaging for the Party's development. Under such

circumstances, no real leading collective could have developed, and it did not develop, indeed, at the head of the Party and the State. The leadership of the Party and the State was centralized in the hands of a few Comrades. The members of the Party leadership were not equal in fact. There was no real criticism and self-criticism in the Party leadership. All these hindered the development of new, young, talented cadres who are faithful to the working class and the people. The Party leadership appropriated most of the positions in the State and the Government, and thus the Ministerial Council practically became a shadow-Government.

This incorrect method of leadership, [and] the increasing self-importance in the upper leadership of the Party greatly contributed to the significant distortion of the economic policy. Having been dazzled by the success achieved in the field of economy, the Party leadership has taken the direction of over-intensified industrialization since 1951. It [the Party leadership] did not take into account the real situation of the country, with her actual resources, with the efficiency and practicality of the investments. At the same time--and this is the other side of the coin--it did not take into consideration the needs of the population, and the rightful demand that the construction of socialism must be combined by the constant improvement of the people's quality of life.

Over-intensified industrialization, and especially the extreme development of the heavy industry and the military industry lead to neglecting agricultural investments and production. The mistake was aggravated by the fast pace of agricultural collectivization that went beyond what the existing economic and political conditions allowed, which not only had a negative influence on agricultural production, but damaged the Party's and the State's relationship with the working peasantry at the same time.

The incorrect methods of the Party and the State leadership and the mistakes made in economic policy greatly contributed to the harmful and incorrect implementation of administrative methods toward the masses. Persecutions were initiated and punishments were applied against a great portion of the population. Power abuses became frequently practiced against the population. Lawfulness staggered. All these caused justified dissatisfaction amongst the population, especially in the villages.

Besides over-intensified industrialization, the expansion of the state apparatus and the development of the armed forces, which was more intense than necessary or permissible, also played a not insignificant role in neglecting the population's interests and needs.

The delegation deems the following steps necessary in order to correct the mistakes:

1. The Party's economic policy must be changed; the pace of industrialization must be slowed down, and the plans for the development of the national economy and, based on that, investments must be reexamined.

The economic policy must be altered so that an overall decrease in the pace of development can coincide with an increase in the production of goods that serve the population's consumption needs. Reality, efficiency, and the aspects of economic cooperation within other countries of the socialist camp must be the decisive factors during the reexamination of investments. In line with this, those [investments] that are inefficient must be terminated, and where the correct utilization of the country's economic resources requires it, they must be slowed down. Investments in agriculture must be increased. The development of agricultural collectives must definitely be slowed down. More support must be provided for the individually farming peasants (fertilizers, mechanized farming, contracts for production).

The construction of houses must be increased significantly, primarily in Budapest and in the county capitals, and the painting of houses must be sped up in Budapest.

The reexamination of national economic plans and the detailed recommendations for restructuring must be completed by August 1, 1953. As a consequence of corrections in the economic policy, the quality of life for the population must already improve tangibly by the fall of this year.

2. Correct relationship must be established between the State and the population. The practice of transgressions and violations of the law in the work of the police, the state security, and the judiciary organs must be terminated, and strict lawfulness must be established. The highest office of state affairs must be established by a set

deadline. The system of the kulak lists must be abolished without delay. The number of employees in the state apparatus must be decreased, and the quality of its work must improve.

In the month June, recommendations for regulations must be submitted to the parliament, and about half of those currently under arrest or detained must be released. The system of internment must be terminated.

3. The Ministerial Council must be reorganized. Several Ministries must be merged. The number of Ministries must decrease; the responsibilities of Ministers must be increased. The Ministerial Council must entirely fulfill its purpose in leading the State. The Presidency of the Ministerial Council in its current form must be terminated, since it had substituted the Ministerial Council, hindered the execution of state affairs, and decreased the personal responsibility of the Ministers.

The composition of the reorganized Ministerial Council should be established as follows:

The President of the Ministerial Council: Comrade Imre Nagy

Ministry of the Interior (including state security) Minister: Comrade Ernő Gerő

Agricultural Ministry (from the merge of the current Agricultural Min. and the Min. of State Farms), Minister: Comrade Andras Hegedus

Domestic and Foreign Trade Ministry (from the merge of the Domestic Trade and Foreign Trade Ministries), Minister: Jozsef Bogнар

Food Industry and Acquisitions (from the merge of the Ministries of Food Industry and that of Acquisitions), Minister: Comrade Ivan Altomare

Transportation and Postal Services Ministry (from the merge of Transportation and Postal Affairs Ministries), Minister: Comrade Lajos Bebrits

Heavy Industry Ministry (from the merge of the Ministries of Mining, Energy, Ironworks, and Chemical Industry), Minister: Istvan Hidas

Ministry of Machine Industry (from the merge of the Ministries of General Machine Industry and Medium Machine Industry), Minister: Istvan Kossa

Light industry (from the merge of the Ministries of Light Industry and Local Industries), Minister: Comrade Arpad Kiss

Ministry of Construction (from the merge of Ministries of Construction Management and of Construction Materials), Minister: Comrade Lajos Szijarto

Ministry of Cultural Affairs (from the merger of Higher Education Affairs, Mass Education and Cultural Ministries), Minister: Jozsef Darvas

Foreign Ministry, Minister: Janos Oldoczki

Defense Ministry, minister: Mihaly Farkas

Justice Ministry, Minister Ferenc Erdei

Health Ministry, Minister Sandor Zsoldos

Finance Ministry, Minister: Comrade Karoly Olt

National Planning Department, President: Comrade Bela Szalai

The President of the Ministerial Council should have two Chief Deputies and one Deputy. Chief Deputies should be Ernő Gerő and Andras Hegedus.

4. The leadership of the Party should be reorganized such that the current Political Secretary and the Organizational Committee are terminated. A Political Committee or Presidency must be established which leads the Party in the period between the plenary meetings of the Central Leadership. The Political Committee or Presidency should consist of 12 members and 3 reserves. New forces should be brought into the Political Committee, but incompetent ones must be left out.

Besides the Political Committee or Presidency, the Secretary of the Central Leadership must be established with 5-7 members. The task of the Secretary is to ensure the execution of the orders of the leading Party organs and to make decisions on a defined group of cadre questions.

The position of the First Secretary must be terminated.

In order to realize all these regulations, the plenary meeting of the Party's Central Leadership must be called in June where all the mistakes must be revealed, and the

necessary orders to correct the mistakes must be given out. A public report must be published about the meeting of the Central Leadership.

Also during June, the recommendation for the reorganization of the Ministerial Council must be brought before the Parliament.

[1] Mihaly Farkas was sent out with his family on September 14, according to the decision of September 1 by the Political Committee, but the MDP PB made a decision on March 3, 1956 to recall him. HNA (Hungarian National Archives) 276.f.53/24 5. oe e.: 276.f.53/274. oe. e.