

Hungarian opposition agrees to talks

Susan Viets in Budapest

AFTER two months of stalled negotiation, an agreement to hold talks between the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the opposition was signed at the weekend.

Topics for discussion will only be decided later this month, but setting a date and rules for elections will be on the agenda.

The breakthrough for the agreement came when the nine opposition groups, united in a "round table," agreed to participate in trilateral negotiations. Having previously insisted on bilateral talks with the ruling party, the opposition has now agreed to the participation of a third group, labelled C.

The social organisations represented in group C are mainly former party affiliates, recently turned independent. Membership is diverse and includes the reactionary Ferenc Munnich Society as well as the National Council of Trades Unions.

"We feel full historical responsibility for the life of this country, so the opposition round table has accepted the participation of these organisations as a compromise," Mr Peter Tolgyessy, a spokesman for the opposition, said.

The opposition's shift follows on the heels of Solidarity's success in the Polish elections.

The Hungarian elections, due to be held in late autumn or early next spring, are at the forefront of opposition concern. According to Mr Tolgyessy, the aim of the talks is to secure a "peaceful and democratic transition to the first really free elections".

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