

Party reformists plan strategy

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Susan Viets in Budapest

AMID rumours of an imminent party split in the weeks preceding the October party congress, reformists of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP) are meeting in Budapest this weekend for a national convention.

"The strategy is to have radical reform ideas become predominant and to have the HSWP reform itself, or to form a new party," said Mr Jozsef Varga, a spokesman for the reform wing of the party.

Mr Varga said: "In no way could the party we want be called a Communist Party. What we want to establish is a

radical leftist party which would carry the traditional features of socialism but would be open to accept new ideas, including bourgeois radical thought."

Last March a new hardline organisation called the Marxist Leninist party was formed. Their spokesman, Mr Sandor Petress, said the party would use force if necessary, and claims the organisation is supported by more than 20 members of the central committee and has army backing.

The army has, however, publicly dissociated itself from the Marxist Leninist Party.

There is a sense of a need to set political affairs in order quickly, with the congress ap-

proaching in just over a month and elections rumoured for mid-December.

A forum was created earlier this year to draft legislation, including an electoral law, a party law, and the post of president of the republic. The forum consists of the HSWP, the nine opposition groups united in a round table, and a third side comprising social organisations.

Talks broke down briefly when the opposition claimed that HSWP property was really the property of the Hungarian state and demanded that it be handed over to the government.

This point is still being debated, but talks have resumed and a new electoral law based

on both proportional and direct representation has been accepted, pending ratification by parliament in the autumn.

Mr Imre Pozsgay, a member of Hungary's four-man ruling praesidium, is the chief party negotiator in the round table talks.

Last week Mr Pozsgay started an angry party debate when he promised to remove the HSWP from workplaces, the traditional party power base at the grassroots level.

In Zala county, in western Hungary, local party members threw out the county leadership last month and voted a reformist worker with no administrative experience into power.

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