

Hungary to join West 'within decade'

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Susan Viets in Budapest

HUNGARY'S new Prime Minister yesterday unveiled his programme to take the country out of the Warsaw Pact and into the European Community within 10 years.

He also promised a redistribution of land based on the 1947, pre-communist registration of ownership.

"Our participation in the Warsaw Pact is contradictory to the wish of the nation, in 1956 as well as in the last elections, and we think the whole agreement is unnecessary," declared Jozsef Antall, promising to

begin negotiations with other members of the Pact.

The commitment endorses an earlier proposal by the opposition Free Democrats, who welcomed the move. "This is exactly what we wanted," said one Free Democrat leader. However the Foreign Minister, Gáza Jezsenszky, stressed that Hungary would maintain good relations with the Soviet Union, similar to those between Moscow and Finland.

Mr Antall told parliament Hungary had achieved a bloodless revolution and that his incoming coalition government would replace a "system of oppression by a system of freedom."

23/5/90
"The hour of great changes has come," he said in a two-hour speech to the 386 parliamentary deputies elected on March 25 and April 8.

As a concession to the rural-based Independent Smallholders, Mr Antall said that agricultural land would be returned to its rightful, pre-1947 owners. Anyone can stake their claim, though the measure is intended for those now farming the land, and excludes the possibility of claiming other forms of nationalised property.

Remnants of the communist system will linger on in the form of state farms, but their number will be limited. The new agricultural system

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based on private ownership will encourage family farms and voluntary co-operatives.

Peter Tolgyessy, a Free Democrat leader, criticised the land reform for not specifying a time scale. He conjured up visions of legal ambiguities and disarray, saying: "If the reform is carried out too slowly Hungary will become a country of people going to court".

Mr Antall also pledged to turn the Hungarian forint into a hard currency, trading on the international money markets, within a year.

He declared that his programme stood for freedom, the people, economic change and a European government.

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25 May 1990