

**The Carl Beck Papers
in Russian and East European Studies**

No. 705

The Hungarian Parliament in Transition

Procedure and Politics

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January 1989

ISSN 0889275X

The Carl Beck Papers:

Editors: William Chase, Bob Donnorummo, Ronald H. Linden

Assistant Editor: Lieselotte Heil

Design and Layout: Robert Supansic

Submissions to *The Carl Beck Papers* are welcome. Manuscripts must be in English, double-spaced throughout, and less than 100 pages in length. Acceptance is based on anonymous review. Mail submissions to: Editor, *The Carl Beck Papers*, Center for Russian and East European Studies, 4G12 Forbes Quadrangle, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

Most socialist states have shown some transformation of their political institutions in the eighties, but the Hungarian experimentation with reforms is significantly different from that of other socialist states. The 1985 national and local elections were held on the basis of a hitherto unique electoral law; citizens were able to nominate candidates of their own choosing. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) Central Committee clearly approved of the expanded responsibilities for the new National Assembly¹ (also called in Hungarian the Parliament or *Országgyűlés*) and held that it should play a more active role in the legislative and political systems. This, of course, would be impossible without major organizational and/or functional changes on the plenary, committee and procedural levels.

While the analysis of the Hungarian plenum and the committee system has been done elsewhere,² procedural questions need further detailed investigation. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect and scope of the procedural rule modification carried out in 1986, and how the rules interface with substantive political issues.³ The analysis should shed light on the question of whether the legislature fulfilled its stated objective; expanded political and legislative input.

The 1985-90 Parliament: Main Characteristics

The Hungarian legislature for the 1985-90 cycle was elected in 1985 according to a new electoral law⁴ which provided for a compulsory multi-candidate system with voters having the right to nominate candidates from the floor. All candidates, however, had to endorse the political program of the Patriotic People's Front.⁵ The election campaign resulted in significant but limited political fermentation, especially in the nomination phase. There was also increased interest by voters and there were some heated debates about controversial political issues. Voters' candidates were approved in 78 cases and 43 of these won in their districts.⁶

Table 1. Composition of the Legislature

[In percentages]

Term	Party Members	Women	Below Age 30	Worker	Peasant	Professional	Retired & Other
1967-71	74.2	19.8	0.0	39.0	21.7	37.0	2.3
1971-75	71.0	24.0	5.9	39.4	17.0	36.5	7.1
1975-80	69.6	28.7	10.5	19.1	4.0	72.6	4.3
1980-85	71.6	30.1	12.5	23.6	5.1	63.9	7.4
1985-90	77.0	20.0	5.0	33.6	4.1	62.3	0.0

Sources: MSZMP X Kongresszusa (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó), 1970, 39; MSZMP XI Kongresszusa (Budapest: Kossuth), 1975, 10; MSCMP XII Kongresszusa (Budapest: Kossuth), 1980; 30; Preliminary Report of the Central Committee to the 13th Party Congress, Népszabadság, March 23, 1985, 17-18; Magyar Nemzet, June 29, 1985, 1.

The electoral reform also created a national list of 35 candidates who ran without opposition. The election results in this category conformed to standard communist practices; candidates winning by landslide majority. The list included pre-selected outstanding figures of the political, religious and ethnic leadership.

The new Parliament showed some meaningful differences from the composition of parliaments in the past and a greater potential to influence the political process. There was a significant membership turnover; 244 deputies or 63% being newly elected. Information is not available about the criteria of candidate pre-selection by the HNF (Hazasfias Népfrent) and the Party, but these decisions were cleared with the Party organization(s) which manipulated the proceedings. Furthermore, Party membership increased from 71 to 77% and Table I shows that agricultural workers, retirees, women and the below-30 age group were definitely underrepresented. The two dominating groups were Party members and educated professionals, i.e., the technocratic elite.

In addition to its altered composition, the functioning of the legislature also underwent some changes and began to experience a steady trend

toward more active law-making as well as administrative supervision. The net results of these developments are positive in that it might be expected that by the end of the five-year cycle a different type of legislature could emerge.

In the plenary meetings during 1985-87, speakers demonstrated more independent attitudes featuring criticism and provocative alternatives. Compared to the past, this trend represented a new atmosphere and a bolder articulation of more independent opinions.⁷

However, in spite of the more frequent appearance of negative votes and abstentions, there was no decisive change in voting. The more aggressive participation of legislators was particularly noticeable in the September 1987 session during the debate on economic reconstruction and tax bills. Considerable opposition surfaced, not only at the committee level, but also in open plenary sessions, occasionally challenging the very foundations of the policy and legislation. Some parts of the bills were modified after committee adoption by plenary vote, others were rejected, even though the final text was always adopted by unanimous vote or minimum opposition.⁸ This new development demonstrated vitality and genuine debate, but also showed that Hungarian parliamentary politics in plenum is still the art of the possible and, at least for the present, will not overstep certain boundaries.

Since 1985, the most significant parliamentary changes took place at the committee level. Meetings of standing committees became more frequent and played an important role in terms of true debate and legislative participation. However, in spite of their expanding role the committees remained constrained by the preeminence of administrative and political forces. They still lack real clout on basic issues. József Bogнар, Chairman of the Plan and Budget Committee, acknowledged that "both in legislation and in administrative supervision the committee procedures reflect government predominance."⁹ While members contributed to the agenda, the proceedings were decisively influenced by the technocratic elite "outsiders." Generally committees succeeded only with secondary

alternatives. They did not substantially modify bill proposals, nor were they able to have a significant impact in their role as administrative supervisors. Committee majorities caused collective decisions to fall into lock-step with the government, i.e., Party positions, and successfully blocked repeated attempts by legislators in the committees and/or on the plenum to initiate new measures. Nonetheless, committee functions expanded and they played an especially active and somewhat independent part in the preparation of the Grosz government program and the tax laws. They became junior partners in shaping the final form of legislation.¹⁰

The Standing Orders: An Overview

While the substantive function of legislatures has decisive importance, the scope of parliamentary activities to a large extent depends on procedural rules. Therefore procedures are generally more important than they appear and need in-depth investigation, especially as they define the perimeters of the work of legislators. The Parliamentary Standing Orders in force during the 1985-86 session¹¹ were insufficient and restrictive if the legislature was to widen its political participation. More flexible rules had to be developed if more diverse political views were to be considered. Recognizing this, leading politicians made repeated references to procedural reforms, but the Assembly cautiously delayed formal action until June 10, 1986. However, numerous legislators called for both general and specific changes; the loosening of the rules for substantive discussion of alternative proposals was repeatedly suggested.¹² It was also proposed that the Government should inform the plenum and/or committees prior to the commencement of major investment projects, closer cooperation be maintained between Government and Parliament, and a special committee on economic matters be created. Additional suggestions for reform focused on the various functions of committees, since this is at the core of legislative activity. Reformers also asked for more time to study policy issues

and proposals.¹³ Finally, the Modified Rules were submitted to the closed session of the plenum in June, 1986. After considerable uncertainty and debate, they were adopted. In most respects they incorporated the restrictive procedures of the former version but with some important alterations.

The new Rules¹⁵ are to regulate the organization and procedures of the Parliament. While they changed and refined the older procedures in some respects, they also retained most fundamental provisos. The new Rules, like their predecessor, have nine chapters: the formation and convocation of the Assembly after its election; the status and role of representatives; the detailed arrangements for discussion and decision-making; the interpellation arrangements and the centrally important committee system; and finally some technical measures regarding the Parliamentary Bureaus' status and functions.¹⁶

The most important parts of the Standing Orders relate to organizational patterns, procedures regarding proposals and decisionmaking, and the committee mechanism. First, it is important to note that the key officers (president, vice presidents and clerks) are elected by secret ballot at the joint recommendation of the Party Central Committee and the National Council of the HNF. The same procedure applies to the election of the Presidential Council (Paragraph 6 and paragraph 7), while the composition of the permanent committees is determined by the plenum at the recommendation of the HNF only (Paragraph 8). The codified role of the Party in the election process is new, but in practice the Party had always played a major role. The HNF's new partnership status is meaningful. The practical application of this rule will answer questions about the real role to be played by the HNF in comparison to the Party. It should also be kept in mind that informal pressures and requests by the Party play a decisive part in these most important selections.¹⁷

The gist of the legislative organization is established in Part III of the Rules which outlines the President's authority and specifies that the committees are the advisory, initiative and supervisory organs of the Assembly. Each of the thirteen committees consists of a standard twenty-five mem-

bers, irrespective of committee profile, with the exception of the Immunity and Ethics committee, which has only eleven members. Also, the plenum has the right to form *ad hoc* committees for specific tasks.¹⁸ Thus, committee size was increased from the twenty-one permitted under the old rules. The changes accommodate the growing input by committees, but leave much to be desired because of their rigid application. The committees have broader authority than in the past. They have the jurisdiction to investigate on their own initiative any question that they deem important and they may make recommendations to the Parliament, the Presidential Council or the Council of Ministers. Government agencies are obligated to respond to such inquiries, but it is also made clear that committees may not impede their authority.

The Rules outline the legislative procedure in some detail. Governmental organs, legislative committees and individual representatives may submit bill proposals, but all such motions must first go to committee (Paragraph 26). This is a new feature which imposes greater limits on individual initiatives since the old rules did not make this procedure mandatory. The reason for this seemingly regressive change was that the perceived enhanced powers of the Assembly caused the leadership to institute safeguards to control legislators.¹⁴ The general principle for voting is simple majority and open vote. Later discussion will show that the voting order concerning amendments has been refined (Paragraph 42), but some controversial aspects were left unresolved.

Because of the paramount significance of committees, the Rules return in part VII once more to their operation and prescribe that meetings are not open to the public, but representatives may attend all but specifically closed meetings (Paragraph 55). The committee infrastructure provides the continuity of operations between the rare plenary sessions as they did in the past. The committees have significant new tasks which may further expand in the future as additional reform in this area is needed.

There are three major areas of deficiency in the procedural rules: items in which the legislature decides without debate; the operation of the committees; and proposals for individual bills. There are twelve rules in the first category which were retained without change from the earlier version. They preserve the controlling power of the parliamentary leadership and the Party. The mechanisms of control include the submission of individual motions (Paragraph 26.6), the urgency requested by the Presidential Council or the Council of Ministers (Paragraph 29.1), the referral of amendments to committee (Paragraph 37.2, Paragraph 37.3), the denial of the right to speak (Paragraph 38), requests to speak prior to the scheduled agenda (Paragraph 39), the exclusion of a member from the deliberations (Paragraph 40), limitation of the debate and cloture (Paragraphs 41.1, 41.2), voting about modifications (Paragraph 42.4), voting by name (Paragraph 42.6), the correction of minutes (Paragraph 45.4) and the ordering of closed meetings (Paragraph 47). Essentially the modified rules simply took over the old provisos in these instances without change, with one important exception; the submission of individual proposals. While under the old rules they were submitted directly to the plenum, modified paragraphs 37.2 and 37.3 assign such motions to a committee first and direct submission to the plenum is exceptional. This innovation is important in that it directs such proposals to the committees and thus increases their controlling power.²⁰ Considering all the items in which rank and file challenge is excluded, it is clear that the legislature's scope of action is severely limited by wide discretionary powers exercised by the presiding officer and/or the majority, essentially amounting to a dictatorial position for the leadership.

In some areas the revised rules provide for better and more flexible procedures promoting an enlarged role for the legislature, but in other aspects they remain conservative. Closed committee meetings (Paragraph 55) with severe limitations on publicity, impede the voting public from understanding the issues.²¹ The Standing Orders fail to provide a satisfactory status for the committees and limit their role as potential

mini-legislatures. They now receive motions at least fourteen days prior to the plenary debate, instead of the previous eight days. However, this can be shortened (Paragraph 28) and in certain circumstances it is also possible to bypass committees altogether (Paragraph 28.4). Representatives receive proposals at least fourteen, and preferably twenty-one days prior to the full session (previously only eight days). These deadlines do not have to be met until after the decision about the agenda is made (Paragraphs 27 and 28), and committee reports must be distributed only "prior to the discussion," thus not always guaranteeing enough time for serious reflection (Paragraph 30). These modifications clearly do not go far enough and further change is needed if the legislative role is to be expanded.

With regard to proposals for individual bills (Paragraph 26.6), there was no precedent established at the time of this writing. The replaced Rules called for such motions to be submitted to the presiding officer who made the recommendations regarding their inclusion on the agenda. This decision was made without debate. In the new rules all such motions are subject to committee jurisdiction, but the old procedure still prevails for motions before the plenum. This represents a definite suppression of the role of individual members and without decisive change in this matter, the claim of meaningful input remains dubious.

Furthermore, representatives are under obligation to "perform their role in accordance with the Constitution" (Paragraph 10.4), a prescription which, in the absence of other normative definitions, could easily be subject to arbitrary interpretation. All votes are open, with the exception of the replacement of the national list member and the election of parliamentary officeholders (Paragraphs 5-6), and all decisions, with the exception of constitutional amendments, are passed by simple majority (Paragraph 43). The technical regulation of the voting order is biased in favor of government proposals (Paragraph 42). This arrangement, when implemented in a one-party system and a common political platform, is

not conducive to the creation of a constructive atmosphere for parliamentary debate.

The interpellation procedure was refined, but not in a progressive manner. By legal definition, the subject of interpellations must deal with questions of the legality of administrative actions, and unsatisfactory implementation or omission of prescribed measures by government bodies. The individual legislator is entitled to rebuttal and formal vote must be taken on the issue (Paragraph 50). However, paragraph 53 differentiates between "interpellations" and "questions." In the latter case, there is no rebuttal and/or vote and an answer must be provided by the Government in the same session. Obviously, there are cases in which it is not clear as to how to categorize the inquiry and in the absence of other regulations, it might become a subject of discretionary interpretation by the presiding officer and/or minister. This would reduce the role of deputies in interpellations.²²

Perhaps the most important new measure is the one which provides for a two-phase procedure (Paragraph 57) on some important issues. In the first phase the legislature works with the broad principles of the proposal, leaving the detailed normative regulations for the second phase. If implemented on a larger scale, this innovation might add to the scope of legislative participation and generate more information for the electorate.

There are other key provisos in the Rules which have important political implications. The formation of county groups of representatives serves the purpose of legislative preparation and coordination with the parliamentary leadership and the committees. These county groups are also contact points for the HNF and the electorate (Paragraph 13). The Rules, however, do not permit the possibility of using these groups in a more thoroughly defined fashion in the legislative process. They could act as spokesmen for regional interests, and in actual practice this is observable on a minor scale, especially in budgetary allocations.

It should also be mentioned that the Rules stipulate that the Assembly has to have at least two sessions per year (Paragraph 23). While this is

also a constitutional proviso, it would be desirable to change this number to three or four, or to delete it. The Presidential Council may call the body into session at any time, but such a modification would be psychologically important as a manifestation of the heightened political participation by the legislature.

In some respects, the reform opened up the procedure and provided a larger role for the membership. Yet the overall conservative nature of the Rules might also be a hindrance for an enlarged legislative role. The reforms presented the leadership with an opportunity to promote the fulfillment of election promises and the much advocated new weight of the Assembly, but the results were meager, leading to the emergence of renewed pressures for change.²³ Actual practice may lean toward a liberal interpretation of the Rules, but to date a predominantly strict interpretation has been used to keep the Parliament confined to the ground rules of official policy, sometimes to the extent of actually violating procedure. It is very likely that further modifications will be enacted during the remainder of the 1985-1990 parliamentary term. If this is not the case, no meaningful political transformation will transpire.

Key Procedural Controversies: Legislative Politics and the Rules

Procedural rules have a major impact on the political and legislative process as they often determine the success or failure of proposals. The following analysis will pinpoint some key issues which played important roles in recent Hungarian parliamentary politics. Foremost among these procedural rules are Paragraphs 6 and 8 regulating the election of parliamentary leadership and the composition of the committees. As discussed above, parliamentary leadership is elected by a secret plenum vote and nominations are submitted jointly by the Party Central Committee and the National Council of the HNF. Until the present, the plenary

vote in these matters has always been unanimous. Considerations of expertise play a significant role in the selection of legislative leaders, but the HSWP also has decisive influence in these decisions.²⁴ Nonetheless, committee chairs are not overwhelmingly filled by Party Central Committee members.²⁵

The political implications of this arrangement are meaningful: the legislative body is not really in charge of its internal structure; effective participation by its members at large is reduced; and the formation of direct links between electors and representatives is prevented. If the intention is to effectively enlarge the Assembly's functions and democratic participation, it will be mandatory to provide a broader role for the entire membership and to expand the powers of the committees.

One of the basic preconditions for successful legislative activity is the allowance for sufficient time for representatives and committees to develop responses to proposals. Current rules expand the deadlines and enhance the quality of the legislators' participation, but the available time is still short,²⁶ and considering the part-time nature of the representation, inevitably adversely affects the deliberations of the legislators, who do not have permanent staffs. The unusually lengthy plenary session of September 16-19, 1987, dealing with the Grosz government's program and the new tax laws, was preceded by a large number of committee meetings in the same month²⁷ which produced thorough debate on controversial issues. The atmosphere of these proceedings, some immediately prior to the plenary session, was feverish and could not provide the contemplative atmosphere necessary for the full deliberation of some controversial parts of the sweeping new legislation. Thus, tight deadlines favor a government which already has all the advantages of the power of initiative.

There is growing resentment of these tight time constraints. At the September 11, 1987, government press conference, it was acknowledged that important deadlines were violated regarding the social welfare package of the budget bill "because of sheer amount of work" included, but that committee members had received "adequate information" through other

channels. The Government also promised that the proposal would be delivered to members within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. Since the plenum was to meet on September 17, this was a flagrant violation of procedural rules and the reporter expressed skepticism about the worth of the legislative process under these conditions.²⁸ At the plenary meeting several representatives complained about inadequate time for a substantive preparation of important bills.²⁹ These incidents demonstrate an awareness of the importance of adequate preparation time and organization. Considering the background, it is likely that more and better modifications could have been designed for the tax laws if the government would not have rushed these proposals. The picture looks even worse if we consider the enormous volume of work the committees perform.³⁰ If the legislature's function is going to be broadened, this part of the Rules will also be a likely target for change.

The assignment of bills and other agenda items to committees is the prerogative of the President of the Assembly. However, any committee may express an advisory opinion if it, or the committee having jurisdiction in the case, so requests (Paragraph 28). Most legislation today affects several areas, and in the absence of guidelines and subcommittees, assignments may be based on arbitrary and/or strategic considerations, creating a dictatorial position for the President who makes these discretionary decisions. The right of other committees to participate somewhat mitigates the arbitrariness of the situation, but in parliamentary procedures the parent committee usually has the edge in the deliberations.

This question generated some concern in recent parliamentary proceedings. Naturally all agenda items may be delegated to the Legal-Administrative and Judicial Committee since all bill proposals have legal aspects. However, this would make it possible to bypass committees which, given their substantive specialty, should have jurisdiction. There are no specific data available on how the vagueness of the relevant rules actually affected the substantive outcome of various agenda items, but more specific delineation of committee jurisdictions could only enhance

the effectiveness of the legislative process.³¹ In recent years the Assembly has increasingly relied on joint committee sessions which were generally useful but sometimes reduced the possibility for in-depth deliberation. The large size of such joint meetings could be an obstacle, as TV and press coverage have indicated in several instances.³² The problem could be partly solved by developing an effective subcommittee system or by the establishment of a rule(s) committee, perhaps composed of several chairmen. While informal negotiations in such matters have occasionally taken place in the past, the codification of this operational principle would help legislators to cope with an enlarged agenda.

The restrictive nature of the Rules is particularly observable in Paragraph 26 dealing with the very important topic of legislative initiative.³³ The text correctly assumes that bill proposals come from the Government and defines both the motions of committees and/or individual representatives as "independent initiatives." Committee proposals have to be submitted to the President, but individual proposals usually must go to the committees first (Paragraphs 26.2 and 26.4). In exceptional circumstances, the latter may be submitted to the President eight days prior to the session. In such cases the President makes a recommendation to the plenum regarding the proposal's acceptance, and the voting takes place without debate. This arrangement is one of the most serious obstacles to legislative flexibility because it creates a double roadblock to individual initiatives which have to be cleared by the committee first and are also subject to discretionary decisions by the plenum. Considering that the legislature is based on a one-party system without an organized opposition and with a 77% party membership, it cannot be expected that representatives would normally risk a breakthrough of the barriers imposed by this monopoly. This explains why in such important questions as the Government Program, the tax laws, or the family law there was an absence of independent initiatives. When parliamentary participation was recommended for economic policy plans, for example, the Assembly President quickly made it clear that this was not in the domain

of the Parliament, but a Party or government decision.³⁴ Nonetheless, several parliamentary statements stress that for more effective legislative functioning, the modification of this rule is imperative.³⁵

There are similar problems regarding proposals for amendments by individual representatives. Such motions have to go to committee first and, in exceptional cases, to the President eight days prior to the plenum (Paragraphs 37.2 and 37.3), but in all instances the proposal must be discussed by committee(s). A representative can modify a proposal prior to the closing of the debate, but this is then regarded as a new proposal and is sent back to committee (Paragraphs 37.7 and 37.8). This arrangement is controversial in several respects. First, the requirement to submit modifications in written form to committee lessens the possibility of developing spontaneous motions in the plenum in response to debate. There is little opportunity to change the modification motions in plenum, since this would require a return to the committee (Paragraph 37.8), which, if implemented, could result in hasty committee action. Practice shows that the application of the principle is in need of reformulation.³⁶

A further problem arises when modification motions are recommitted to the original committee and there is no opportunity to involve other committees in formal decisionmaking even if there is a clear need to do so. This effectively weakens the potential role of committees other than the parent committee which have an interest in the issue. It also strengthens the parent committee's power to reject modification requests, since they would generally be inclined to uphold their original position. Finally the committee can supersede both the original motion and the modification request by developing a new compromise version.³⁷ This lack of procedural clarity and inconsistency in application can result in the abortion of important substantive proposals. Representative Jenő Horváth's modification motions regarding criminal law reforms were not submitted to the plenum by the committee as prescribed by Paragraph 37.6. This resulted in a hastily convened committee meeting which quickly repeated its former rejection. Thus, the important question of the

police investigation phase could not receive the in-depth attention it required.³⁸

The problem of modification proposals surfaced in several instances at the September 1987 session. This prompted a response by the Chair of the Legal Committee who called for stricter observation of the Rules and also stated that there are unresolved issues which may prompt further revision of the procedures.³⁹ This suggestion fits into the general pattern of political reform plans, the centerpiece of which is an upgrading of the Parliament's status. The cases cited show that substantive legislative participation can be prevented or blocked by present restrictions, and that some proposals, if not barred, could have resulted in different provisos in the criminal law reform, the economic stabilization program and the tax bills.

The Rules are also controversial regarding the conduct of debate. The presiding officer sets the order of speakers and decides about further requests for statements (Paragraph 38). In practice, the Chair dominates the procedure and representatives feel uncomfortable interrupting speeches. The problem could be solved by a simple informal understanding whereby the Chair would, as a matter of course, ask if there are more statements. Conservatives argue that this would make the debate endless, while others note that this would not be the case since debate can be closed at any time. This issue has been raised on plenum without resolution,⁴⁰ and the political implications are obvious.

At the core of the decisionmaking process is the voting procedure. The ground rules are laid out in Paragraph 42 which leaves loopholes and uncertainties. Vote is taken first about modified parts of a bill and then about the entire proposal (Paragraph 42.2). If, however, the Council of Ministers disagrees with the modification, the first vote is taken on the Council's version and only then on the modification (Paragraph 42.3); representatives may request separate votes regarding modification motions (Paragraph 42.4). This seemingly exhaustive regulation is unsatisfactory. Inconsistency in practice has resulted in situations where a

representative had to vote against the whole bill even though he disagreed with only one part since the question for separate vote was not called.⁴¹ The entire voting order is controversial because the government's primacy in the voting order has serious psychological impact on the legislators. It is difficult to expect the 77 percent of the representatives who are Party members to oppose the government in this one-party system in open voting when the government has already made its position clear. The realistic outlook for a majority "nay" vote in this atmosphere, short of a political landslide, is limited.

More serious procedural anomalies are also well known. According to the records, the plenary vote on the Grosz government program was unanimous. However, there were subsequent revelations about alleged voting irregularities, i.e., the Chair was accused of proceeding unfairly by not calling the question for "nay" votes. In the absence of this step, short of creating a scandalous scene, the vote had to remain "unanimous," distorting the true opinion of the legislative body and undermining its credibility with the electorate.⁴² The response of the Assembly President to an inquiry from the floor was unsatisfactory. He claimed that "he assumed that the vote was unanimous and therefore he did not call the question."⁴³ The Chair of the Legal Committee summarized the controversy by stating that concern over the voting procedure was constructive and underlined the necessity for further study and revision of the Rules.⁴⁴

The sensitive points in the procedures noted above might be taken as proving the shallowness of the Parliament's role in Hungarian politics. However, actual political trends and Prime Minister Grosz's specific proposals signal the serious intention to give more influence to the legislature.⁴⁵ Some of the procedural weaknesses are caused by the nature of the rules in force and not by Machiavellian maneuvering. There is clearly an unfamiliarity with the complexities of parliamentary politics. More sophistication will be needed to establish smooth legislative operations, both in substance and in form, and there is movement in this direction.

In the area of interpellations, the Assembly lost ground in 1986-87 as compared to the previous year. As referred to earlier, the new rules, while making procedure more specific in governmental response and voting areas, introduced a differentiation between formal "interpellations" and "questions." The net result appears to be a declining interest in the usage of both procedures. There were six interpellations submitted in 1985-86, four dealing with national and two with local issues.⁴⁶ There was some procedural uncertainty in handling the interpellations, but in this area there was a new legislative vitality. In 1986, a growing sense of independence was demonstrated by the increase in opposition votes and the outright rejection of the government's position on the import price question.⁴⁷ It was anticipated that the number of interpellations would increase, but the new rules stifled this development. The discretionary right of the President to classify legislators' inquiries as interpellations or only questions expressed a preference by the political leadership to downplay the more forceful use of this device. In the 1986-87 session the number of interpellations declined to one and there were only five questions. This change had a negative impact on the political clout of the legislators and tarnished their image in the eyes of their constituencies. Whether this trend will be reversed by rule revision and/or a different practice remains to be seen.

Committee functions are important aspects of any legislature. This is particularly true in Hungary because the committees are regarded as the operational organs of the Assembly when the latter is not in session. An in-depth investigation of committees is outside the frame of this study and has been discussed elsewhere,⁴⁸ but some procedural aspects are worth mentioning. The history of legislation in Hungary indicates that subcommittee usage is near zero. The reason for the reluctance to rely on this method of law-making rests with specific political considerations. The control of subcommittees by the chair of the parent committee is difficult, and if the subcommittee should act contrary to the parliamentary leadership, difficulties would arise. The preeminence of outside experts and

bureaucracy spokesmen at committee meetings also has a negative effect on the use of subcommittees,⁴⁹ but this is not a procedural question, but rather a matter of political practice. Nonetheless, there is a strong cause-effect relationship in this area, because government-influenced closed meetings, coupled with controlled media publicity, result in manipulated information, undermining the credibility of the committees in the public mind. Since the committees are in some ways more important than the plenum, the feeling of voter participation is severely affected by these procedures. If Hungary's leaders are sincere in expressing their desire to expand the Parliament's role, this is an important reform-sensitive area. Since meetings are still often shrouded in secrecy and minutes are not available, little is known about internal decisionmaking. The rules prescribe majority vote, but very often committees decide on consensus basis. The official minutes of the legislature report only on plenary meetings (*Országgyűlési Ertésítő*) and, while available in national libraries,⁵⁰ they do not adequately inform the public. Furthermore, press reports, which are generally commendable, offer only abbreviated versions of the proceedings.⁵¹

Our analysis shows important linkages between procedural formalities and the substance of legislation. There are many deficiencies in this area today and this observation is corroborated by an increasing realization in Parliament that reforms are sorely needed to promote political progress through formal procedures and/or by observing more closely and consistently the rules in force. Under the current rules, the Party's leading power is secure. The large Communist majority amongst the membership and leadership of the Parliament can dominate the legislative process. If future institutional reforms alter the flow of influence in favor of the Assembly, the Party's relative weight can be expected to weaken. In particular, this could be caused by the increasing presence of associations and the liberalization of the general political atmosphere. In this regard, the mushrooming of various groups in the mid-eighties is expected to accelerate with the passage of the new 1988 Law of Associations.⁵²

The 1987 "Law about Law-Making"⁵³ and other future reform measures will expand the Parliament's influence. It could be expected to more frequently act as a genuine interest aggregator, particularly if planned electoral reforms lead to stronger grassroot participation and influence. An opening up of candidate preselections in the election nominating phase, coupled with wider legislative powers within a reformed parliamentary process, will significantly strengthen the influence of groups in the late eighties. The expanding pluralism of Hungarian society will affect the Party's parliamentary power which, however, will be expected to mediate conflicting interests. In order to succeed in this delicate task, substantial adaptation of the Rules of Order will be required, including leadership decentralization and more independent decisionmaking for members on internal and procedural matters. As long as conservative reluctance hinders change and flexibility, meaningful parliamentary reforms will remain only a promise.

Procedure, Politics and Reforms: Perspectives

The results of this study suggest that, in order to provide a better procedural setting for the operation of the legislature, the revision of the Standing Orders was long overdue. Regrettably, however, these 1986 modifications remained unsatisfactory in many respects and in some areas even represented a retrogression. The rigidity of the older rules survived without much change. The conservative character of the new rules was particularly evident in some key areas of the legislative process, e.g., the election of the parliamentary leadership, the selection of personnel, committee composition, the domination of the Assembly presidency, and the wide range of the leadership's discretionary powers which are exercised without the possibility of debate. Some of the regulations are too vague and create fertile ground for irregularities and/or arbitrary interpretations, while others are too formalistic and hinder substantive contributions by

legislators. It appears that the answer to the hypothesis at the onset of this study is negative; the Rules do not provide adequate conditions for an enlarged legislative function. Furthermore, for serious political reform to occur the relationship between formal rules and substantive politics must improve to bolster significant institutional adaptation.

The analysis suggests that parliamentary initiatives remain in the firm grip of the Government and the Party, which retained the power to set the legislative agenda and act as the ultimate interest aggregators. However, Hungary's political leaders have recently proposed that the Assembly should play a more independent role, while the HSWP should constrain the scope of its decisionmaking powers, especially in operational details.⁵⁴

While there is a general consensus in the political leadership about the necessity of reform, there are sharp disagreements about the nature and scope of the changes. There are those who want "the reform of the reforms," others who favor the superseded moderate Kádár line, and finally the "hard-line" conservatives who pay only lip-service to reforms.⁵⁵

However, an overhaul of the political structure is imperative in contemporary Hungarian politics; the questions of pluralism, the one-party system, the internal structure of the Party, which were all previously untouchable topics, are now open for public discussion and debated in the political literature.⁵⁶ The focus of the political restructuring is the constriction of the Party's decisionmaking power and the enlargement of the scope of parliamentary participation, including legislative initiatives before Party directives.⁵⁷ Some of these reform measures are in the actual planning phase and if implemented they would promote a different model of Hungarian socialism than we have been accustomed to in the past. They also might serve as examples for change in other socialist states.⁵⁸

Such reform measures would represent a substantial overhaul of the political system and the Party's role in it, and thus, as one might expect, there are serious opponents to change. These conservative forces are still present in important Party and governmental posts and might attempt to

prevent the successful implementation of the reforms, without which economic advancement is not possible. It is vital for the regime that stringent economic measures be balanced with political innovations. The newly introduced personal income tax, the general turnover tax, and further price increases which lowered workers' living standards could trigger large-scale popular unrest. Reforms expanding the political participation of citizens through the legislative process could defuse this tension, but still might not guarantee success.

In the September 1987 full session of the Parliament, government policy was both challenged and sustained. While Kádár acknowledged that "we have not found the proper implementation of socialism yet,"⁵⁹ other representatives questioned the leadership's responsibility and accountability. This lengthy legislative session, extensive committee meetings, and sharp floor debates signaled a new departure for the Parliament. The committees passed numerous modifications and the plenum accepted many of these, but rejected others. Members of the legislature began more independently to assert themselves and forge their own new role, within the limits of a one-party system. The pressures for further reforms are observable everywhere. New concepts and ideas, including constitutional reform, revision of electoral rules, and modification of legislative procedure are becoming commonplace. Major changes in these areas would result in important institutional transformations, but they would remain within the parameters of the one-party system and the socialist alliance. In the long run, however, they could also carry the danger of slipping out of the limits of the established socialist system. The public's genuine opinions regarding the economic changes and political innovations are difficult to assess. Cynicism and skepticism were openly observable at the grassroot level in September 1987, yet after the parliamentary session, resentment seemed to temporarily recede. Only the future will tell if the working classes, who have to bear the brunt of the sacrifices, will passively accept policies based on increased economic hardships and limited political reform.⁶⁰

Legislative reform is a pivotal plank in Hungary's political program. The June 1985 decision of the Central Committee made it clear that the legislative branch should play a larger role⁶¹ and that this cannot be accomplished without a major rearrangement of the relationship between the Council of Ministers, the Presidential Council, the Party apparatus, and the Parliament. Furthermore, parliamentary reform raises the difficult question of the existential nature of the body itself, its origins, and the electoral system. Active political participation by the electorate and increased legitimacy of the leadership both require an improved electoral system.

This writer and other informed observers of the 1985 elections have noted several weaknesses in the electoral process. For example, candidate selection lacked a clearly defined procedure and the nominating meetings showed many anomalies.⁶² Others have commented that Party influences dominated behind closed doors and that this created voter skepticism.⁶³ However, the 1985 elections could be viewed only as a beginning and other corrective measures could be established which would greatly improve the system. The suggested enlargement of the national list could provide for more input by major societal groups and organizations, especially if they were to be part of the candidate selection process. Also, the creation of a second chamber presumably dealing with economic matters is thought to improve the quality of legislative output.⁶⁴ To date, suggestions for reform have remained within the socialist one-party framework, yet conservative opponents express dismay at Parliament's apparent expansion and complain, "Parliament is not what it used to be."⁶⁵ They express concern that the legislature voted down governmental proposals and this could happen again, endangering Party power.⁶⁶ This is probably an unrealistic overreaction and is brushed aside by reformers who insist that the Party's carefully engineered withdrawal from operational details would not terminate its main directive role, especially in the key ministries of defense, foreign affairs, and interior.⁶⁷ If the Party leadership freed itself from procedural details but retained ultimate

decisionmaking power and its guiding role,⁶⁸ the authority of the Government and power sharing with the Parliament would inevitably increase.

Revisions of rules could be undertaken on an even larger scale without endangering the power monopoly of the Party. It could simultaneously make parliamentary politics more palatable, facilitating the Assembly's role in conflict resolution. Specific steps for this objective could include the candidate selection for parliamentary leadership, with nominations coming from the floor and/or from a nominating committee rather than from outside organizations. Since the committees are the permanent working organs of the legislature, their preparation time should be substantially increased and their size adjusted to the relative importance of their profile. While they need to retain the right to hold executive sessions, closed meetings should be kept at a minimum and there should be full disclosure of information for the general public by the media. These steps would have the positive effect of informing the electorate and bolstering the legitimacy of the committees. The contradiction between the dynamic activities of the committees and the narrow limitations of plenary procedures should be eliminated. There is also the need to substantially expand the frequency and scope of the plenum, which would not require a formal amendment. The two-phase procedure could also be used more frequently and Parliament should be permitted to entertain independent motions and modifications, responding to open debate.⁶⁹

In the technical procedural area, there are several options available for reform of legislative functions. The list of twelve situations in which decisions are made without debate could be narrowed to only a few. This would greatly increase member participation. Likewise, liberal use of the interpellations could strengthen the supervisory role of legislators, creating closer contacts with, and heightened confidence from, the voters. As the findings in this study indicate, the strong controlling power of the leadership could be decentralized by introducing a rules committee and by creating a subcommittee and an *ad hoc* committee system. Furthermore, the voting procedure should be revised in order to avoid the anomalies

that have been observed. There are other means to facilitate legislators' influence vis-a-vis inherent governmental advantages in the voting order, such as the occasional use of secret ballots.⁷⁰

Some of these revisions could be implemented without formal amendments by altering present practices and/or employing a different interpretation of the rules in force. None would entail serious risk to the Party's ultimate influence in the Parliament.⁷¹ The HSWP could consider the reduction of its representation in the parliamentary membership. It is not *sine qua non* to maintain a 77% presence when the Party membership in the society at large is only about 8%. In the absence of other political parties, a reduced party ratio would enhance the legitimacy of the Parliament with the voters and would be more in accord with the general thrust of Hungary's political reforms. Thus the Assembly could better serve as interest aggregator, between often competing group interests.

In the final analysis, procedural changes would have some impact but no formalistic legal rule can solve the underlying basic question concerning the scope of the legislators' political clout. The outlook for legislative changes could be promising in the future if parliamentary functions were to be enlarged. Rules revision would widen the opportunity for innovations, which in turn would stimulate substantive reform measures; the two are interconnected and act upon each other.

At the present time, there is no tangible consensus about the transformation of Parliament. Conservative officials are reluctant to make changes, while reformist politicians favor bolder steps; the odds are in favor of the latter.⁷² To be sure, the issue is difficult from the point of view of the regime. Reform carried too far might open up the procedure to a degree undesirable for the one-party system. Yet the maintenance of a narrowly restricted system would stifle the Assembly's work, keeping legislative reforms and political participation at an unsatisfactory level.⁷³

Official reform plans essentially call for significant institutional changes, but not radical systemic replacement. Government, Party and academic task forces are working on a variety of specific projects which

are to be completed by 1989/1990. Some perimeters were visible as early as 1987/88. There are reform plans on three levels: the organs of government; the legislature; and the local administration. The main issue is the reduction of the Party's decisionmaking power by expanding the role of the Government and the legislature. The new Party leadership in place since May 1988 leans toward more radical changes with a quicker tempo than did its predecessors. The key question, however, remains the contraction of the HSWP's dominating presence in operational decisions. While the Party's guiding role is to be preserved in broad policy issues, more direct decisionmaking power will be extended to the Government, particularly on economic matters.⁷⁴

Another important aspect of institutional reforms is the future role of the Presidential Council, especially its substituting for the legislature. This function had been reduced by the December 1987 constitutional modification which stipulated that the Council cannot alter laws passed originally by the Parliament.⁷⁵ Yet the problem is much larger, and questions have been raised about the nature and even necessity of the Council. There have been some proposals suggesting its abolition and the creation of a Presidential post.⁷⁶ This would require constitutional change and raise the issue of whether the large-scale transfer of legislative and administrative supervisory powers would make it too difficult for the Party to preserve its influence in the legislature. The Assembly is still perceived as an instrument of socialist democracy and is expected to be controlled by the Party's parliamentary faction.

Both Party reformists and the democratic opposition stand for radical institutional reforms, but their programs differ. Representative Király, a reformist who was expelled from the Party in early 1988, visualized the possibility of a stronger legislature within the one-party system.⁷⁷ Yet various factions in the democratic opposition increasingly suggest a multi-party solution and a pluralistic Parliament as the only desirable alternative.⁷⁸ The introduction of electoral changes and the broadening of the legislative role demands careful planning if the political impact is to

be somewhat controlled. With the growing influence of groups pluralization could reach larger dimensions than was ever known before. Assuming societal support this could contribute to the legitimization of the political reforms, but under certain conditions it also could represent a threat to the one-party system, triggering reactions. As the growing independence of some legislators indicates, an articulate oppositional faction might emerge and, in case of conflicts between the Party and the Parliament, a more serious rank-and-file revolt could take place.⁷⁹ Thus, electoral changes will have to be planned cautiously if the Party is to prevent pluralistic forces from undercutting its leadership. The 1990 elections will be one measure of success concerning these questions.

A particularly controversial problem is the definition of the concept of "operational decisions" from which the Party might be expected to withdraw. Lacking a precise delimitation of authority, the anticipated struggle for influence would favor the stronger partner and thwart the efforts of reformers.⁸⁰ In the process of implementation, the interpretation of which areas the Party is to withdraw from could slow down or divert changes. On the other hand, practice might overreach intended objectives. Ultimately, however, the prospects for reform will depend on the tenuous balance between the Party's power and the public's acceptance of the leadership which could be upset by unforeseen circumstances. The endurance of the regime rests on the Party's strength at the leadership level as well as on the loyalty of its rank-and-file membership. Today, leadership unity is not strong and there are ample signals indicating serious internal weakness of the Party ranks.⁸¹ Debates of the Preliminary Guidelines of the Party Conference in April and May 1988 indicate very strong grassroot opposition to Party leadership, both conservative and reformist, with the rejection of the latter being the stronger.⁸²

With the replacement of János Kádár by Károly Grosz as General Secretary in May 1988, the political alignment changed. The HSWP Party Conference carried through long-awaited changes of its top leadership. Six close associates of former General Secretary Kádár were removed

from the Political Bureau and some were also eliminated from the Central Committee, where one-third of the members were new appointees.⁸³ This marked the end of the moderate cautious reformist era of the seventies and eighties. The Political Bureau now includes several radical reformers, among them Imre Pozsgay and Rezső Nyers, tilting the balance of power in favor of a bolder reformist policy under Grosz, who is expected to accelerate the pace of the reforms, while keeping the more extreme reformists and dissidents at bay without surrendering essential Party prerogatives. How far he can go and what the limits of such policies are, given growing economic problems and political resistance, remains to be seen.

The resolution of the Party Conference outlined the directions of the political reforms and took a different position from what had been proposed prior to the conference. Within the non-negotiable one-party system, a policy of cooperation with other views and different philosophies was proposed. The resolution stated that "We regard constructive criticisms and proposals important in our progress and we shall judge the different views according to their content."⁸⁴ A substantially new element was introduced by a call for constitutional revision, not just modifications as was proposed in the previous document. The Parliament was designated as the chief legislative organ, and was given an important role in interest aggregation and administrative supervision. The Party will continue to exercise its influence through its members in Parliament. The undefined principle of socialist pluralism points in the direction of broader rights of association and expression, and freedom of religion and conscience. These new rights should be legally guaranteed with the creation of a constitutional and administrative court.⁸⁵

The recognition by the Party Conference that without constitutional reform there cannot be meaningful political institutional reform prompted the Parliament in June 1988 to establish a 27-member constitutional preparatory committee. At the time of this writing it is too early to identify the specific features of the proposed future Constitution, but the

breadth and depth of the changes could range from a revised legal status for the Party to the establishment of a constitutional court.⁸⁶ Some of the theoretical approaches question even the need for the legal incorporation of the Party's status.⁸⁷ A safer observation is, however, that there will be a reordering of the relationship between the Party and the country's highest level governmental organs, with emphasis on the significantly enlarged powers of the Assembly. The time-table for the constitutional reform prescribes various stages, including the preparation of a draft and parliamentary debate in early 1990 prior to the general elections.⁸⁸

In conclusion, if the new leadership succeeds with economic stabilization and the populace resists the temptations of negative emotional reactions, the reform of Hungary's political institutions, and especially its Parliament, could serve as a catalyst for the legitimation of the present regime. Conversely, if the economic program fails, the reforms, if implemented in earnest, could lead to an increasingly vocal opposition and even a major political crisis.

Notes

Special thanks are due for the cooperation and courtesy of high officials and representatives of the National Assembly, especially the Parliamentary Bureau; also the Hazafias Népfront and academic institutions. The author also expresses his appreciation to Eastern Michigan University for a sabbatical in 1987 to undertake this and other research projects.

1. Convoked on June 28, 1985. Official Hungarian terminology is "*Országgyűlés*" or "Parliament." We will use these terms interchangeably.
2. See Barnabas Racz, "Political Participation and the Expanding Role of the Hungarian Legislature," *East European Quarterly* XXII, No. 4, January 1989, 459-93.
3. For Standing Orders see *A Magyar Népköztársaság Országgyűlésének ügyrendje* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1986), also referred to here as (procedural) rules or "Rules."
4. 1983: III Law about the election of the National Assembly and local council representatives, *Magyar Közlöny*, 27 December 1983.
5. In Hungarian "*Hazafias Népfront*," abbreviated in this study as HNF.
6. For detailed analysis of the elections see Barnabas Racz, "Political Participation and Developed Socialism: The Hungarian Elections of 1985," *Soviet Studies* 39 (January 1987), 40-62. For Hungarian critique see Peter Schmidt, "Kötelező többes jelölés – az 1985-os képviselőválasztások tükrében," *Társadalmi Szemle* no. 10, 1987, 48-57.
7. Content analysis of parliamentary speeches in 1985-87 shows that more than 50% of speakers expressed criticism about some aspects of government policies and/or societal conditions; see Barnabas Racz, "Political Participation and the Expanding Role...", 466-69.
8. For parliamentary reports see *Népszabadság* nos. 16-21, September 1987.
9. Interview with Dr. József Bognár, Chairman of the Plan and Budget Committee, *Ibid.*, 20 February 1987, 5.
10. For parliamentary proceedings reports see *Népszabadság*, issues 16-21, September 1987, and 10-17, December 1987.

11. No. 6/1971-1975 Resolution of the National Assembly "Az Országgyűlés ügyrendjének módosításáról és egységes szövegéről" in Károly Besnyő, *Az Alkotmány a gyakorlatban* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1985), 130. See also *Magyar Közlöny* No. 82, 20 October 1972.
12. Editorial, 1 July 1985, *Népszabadság*, 3; György Lazar Prime Minister's statement on plenum, *Ibid.*, 12 October 1985, 3.
13. Statement by Dr. Kálmán Szabó on plenum *Ibid.*, 11 October 1985, 6, and editorial, 12 October 1985, 1. See also statement by József Bognár, Plan Committee Chair, 21 December 1985, 2-3 and Markoja Justice Minister on plenum 21 March 1986, 2-6.
14. Background information suggests that the plenum did not fully agree on the Rules proposal. While adoption by vote was reported, further work was carried out by a committee which issued the final version without plenary vote; see also communiqué in *Népszabadság*, 27 June 1986, 3; for analysis see 28 June, 4.
15. Also referred to as procedures, published in *Magyar Közlöny* as 9/1985-1990 "Resolution Regarding Modification of the Standing Orders of the Parliament," No. 27, 13 July 1986, 610-19.
16. The rules contain the following subheadings: The Formation of the Parliament; The Representatives; Organization; Clerks, Committees; Sessions of the Parliament; Procedural Order; Interpellations; Committee Proceedings; The Operation of the Constitutional Council and The Parliamentary Bureau.
17. Background information 1986, 1987.
18. There are thirteen committees: Construction and Transportation; Defense; Industry; Legal-Administrative and Judiciary; Social and Health; Community Development and Environmental Protection; Commerce; Cultural; Foreign Affairs; Agriculture; Planning and Budgeting; Immunity and Ethics; Youth and Sport.
19. The reason for this change was the Tallósy Amendment to the Law of Duties, when the plenum by majority voted down the government proposal. See *Népszabadság*, 21 March 1986, 3.
20. *Ibid.*

21. In recent years deputies took advantage of their right to attend other committee meetings without voting rights; this practice facilitated participation and a cross-fertilization of political input.
22. Background information, personal interview 1986.
23. The Assembly delegated a special committee to study the Rules and recommend changes, *Magyar Nemzet*, 18 December 1987, 4.
24. Background information 1987.
25. As of December 1987 only two standing committee chairmen were Central Committee members: Rezső Nyers (Commerce Committee) and Mátyás Szűrös (Foreign Affairs Committee).
26. See page 10 above. For members it is 14-21 days before the plenum, for committees, 14 days, but this can be shortened, Rules paragraphs 27, 28.
27. There were eleven committee meetings reported in detail in *Népszabadság*, Nos. 8-16, September 1987.
28. *Ibid.*, 11 September 1987, 4 and 8.
29. *Ibid.*, 18 September 1987, 3.
30. In the 1985-87 period committees had a total of 186 meetings with 279 agenda items. Comparatively in the entire 1980-85 period there were 289 sessions with 361 topics; information by Parliamentary Bureau.
31. See statement by Representative Dr. Erika Tomsits on plenum: "Whose right it is to decide which committee is competent? In general terms it is obvious that it should be the Legal Committee but in questions of substance it is impermissible ... that for example in questions of parasolvency and its legal consequences we should decide without the Health Committee's input." The issue was tabled and it never was picked up later for specific discussion, see *Országgyűlési Értesítő*, Session 16, 26 June 1987, 1203-1206.
32. A joint committee was established recently for the oversight of tax legislation; this could serve as model and precedent, *Népszabadság*, 16 October 1987, 1.

33. See *Appendix* for text.
34. For parliamentary discussion regarding Representative Király's proposal see *Népszabadság*, 27 June 1987, 2. Perhaps somewhat ahead of the trend, Király proposed a special committee for alternative future economic policy plans, which could have involved the use of independent initiatives. The recommendation was authoritatively aborted even before it could take shape procedurally.
35. See parliamentary statements, *Ibid.*, 16-21 September 1987.
36. *Országgyűlési Ertésítő*, 1987, 1204. Amendments by Representative B. Südi were handled this way, while another motion from Zoltán Király was not dealt with.
37. For discussion of some of these questions on plenum see *Ibid.*, 1204.
38. Representative Südi also submitted four modification motions to the plenum regarding the Criminal Code reform without having placed these before committee. By strict interpretation, this was a violation of the procedure. Nonetheless the plenary meeting was suspended and the Legal Committee was to decide on the motion. The committee rejected the motions and the plenum passed the bill with twelve negative votes and thirty-two abstentions. In this case the procedure was flexibly applied but Representative Király's proposal regarding the economic reconstruction package, a more important proposal than the Südi motion, was passed over and not responded to formally, *Országgyűlési Ertésítő*, 26 June 1987, 1203-1204.
39. György Bölcsény, Secretary of the Legal Committee, *Népszabadság*, 21 September 1987, 3.
40. Dr. Erika Tomsits, *Országgyűlési Ertésítő*, 26 June 1986, 1204-1205.
41. *Ibid.*; for similar problems on September plenum see *Népszabadság*, 16-21 September 1987.
42. Statement by Zoltán Király, *Ibid.*, 21 September 1987, 2.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Closing session, *Ibid.*

45. Grosz's statement in Parliament, *Ibid.*, 18 September 1987, 5. See Géza Kilenyi, "A kormányzati tevékenység fejlesztéséről," *Társadalmi Szemle*, No. 8-9, 1987, 54-63.
46. This was a notable increase as compared to past data; there were only two in 1984-85, both dealing with local questions. The list of national topics included the proposed Energy Law, foreign names in commerce, work holidays and pricing of import goods; two local problems related to judicial organs and a resort area.
47. For detailed discussion see Barnabas Racz, "Political Participation and the Expanding Role...", 469-72.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Press releases of committee proceedings clearly indicate this.
50. Particularly in the Parliamentary and Széchenyi Libraries; access to the former, however, is limited.
51. This writer found mostly "atmospheric" and precision differences between the official minutes and press accounts. However, with the increase of parliamentary activities the media reporting might be less reliable.
52. For text of proposed law see *Népszabadság*, 27 August 1988, *Supplement*.
53. Passed by Parliament in December 1987. For implementation it was necessary to modify the Constitution Paragraph 30.5; the two measures stipulate that certain basic laws can be passed only by the Assembly, see *Magyar Nemzet*, 18 December 1987, 1-3.
54. See János Berecz, Secretary of the Central Committee, in his closing comments at the Party theoretical conference at Szeged, *Népszabadság*, 23 February 1987, 3; also István Katona, a Central Committee member, "Demokrácia és Egypartrendszer," *Társadalmi Szemle*, No. 11, 1986, 3-13.
55. There is a rich literature about reforms today and perceptions vary. See András B. Nagy, "Új kategóriák a reformfolyamatban," *Ibid.*, No. 8-9, 1987, 111-14.
56. János Berecz, "Pluralizmus, part, vezető szerep," *Ibid.*, No. 7, 1987, 3-10.

57. For problems of interinstitutional relations see William A. Welsh, "The Status of Research on Representative Institutions in Eastern Europe," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1980, 389-92.
58. See especially Géza Kilenyi, "A kormányzati tevékenység továbbfejlesztéséről," *Társadalmi Szemle*, No. 8-9, 1987, 54-63.
59. *Népszabadság*, 17 September 1987, 4.
60. Background information 1987. It is admitted that retirees, families with more children and industrial workers will bear a heavy burden of the costs.
61. Communiqué of the HSWP Central Committee, *Népszabadság*, 27 June 1985, 1.
62. Barnabas Racz, "Political Participation and Developed Socialism...", 42-45.
63. Peter Schmidt, "Kötelező többes jelölés ...", 48-57.
64. Background information 1987. However, efficiency often suffers in bicameral systems. A separate economic chamber could raise legitimate questions in terms of socialist representation and would reduce the other chamber's weight.
65. Quoted by Géza Kilenyi, "A kormányzati tevékenység fejlesztéséről...", 57.
66. It is prudent to observe perhaps that the communist Assembly voted down the communist government. See also #19.
67. It appears that serious consideration might be given to a flexible system in which the role would vary according to relative political weight and need.
68. Parliamentary and political leaders also use the terms "inspirational," "stimulator" and the like; most frequent is the "guiding role," which is a time-tested and "ideologically acceptable" term, interview 1987.
69. For the discussion of some of these questions in a similar vein see "Válaszuton az Országgyűlés," interviews with legislative specialists, *Magyar Nemzet*, 14 December 1987, 5.
70. For more analysis on parliamentary reforms see Barnabas Racz, "A politikai intézmények reformja – egy amerikai politológus szemével," *Ibid.*, 19 April 1988, 5.

71. E.g., committee size, frequency and length of plenary meetings, candidate selection for leadership, *ad hoc* committees, conduct of procedures.
72. Personal interviews with committee chairmen, 1987.
73. For discussion of the dangers of loosening the Rules too much, consult editorial *Népszabadság*, 1 July 1985, 3, expressing concern that this could lead to ineffective debates and departures from the topics, undermining the purpose.
74. See the decisions of the Party about the political tasks and the development of the political institutions: *A MSZMP országos értekezletnek állásfoglalása a párt feladatairól, a politikai intézményrendszer fejlesztéséről*, Supplement, *Népszabadság*, 23 May 1988, 1-16, especially Part I, 8-9.
75. The Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic, paragraph 30.5. See also note 53.
76. István Schlett, "Közéleti kérdések a politikai rendszer reformjához," *Társadalmi Szemle*, No. 7, 1987, 41-56; Géza Kilenyi, "A kormányzati tevékenység fejlesztéséről ...", 54-63.
77. Tibor Szabó, interview with Zoltán Király, "Az egész rendszer igényli a megújítást," *Tiszatáj*, No. 1, 1988, 93-102. Király sees Parliament's potential as an interest aggregator, raises the question of the Presidential Council, and the need for various procedural reforms including the desirability of full-time representatives.
78. The most outspoken are the Democratic Forum and the Network of Free Initiatives. The Forum proposed "political platforms" after declaring itself a political organization, and is also planning to run for elections on its own program, *Népszabadság*, 5 September 1988, 3. The future outlook for multi-party proposals is questionable under present political realities.
79. However, the dependency of representatives on their employment, party membership and informal pressures would act as safeguards, Barry Newman, "Whiff of Pluralism in Hungary," *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 January 1988, 1.
80. Personal interview with HNF spokesman, April 1988.
81. Many local organization leaders and members are politically passive, ideologically weak, sometimes hostile to the Party, and frequently corrupt. These and other problems

are repeatedly discussed in the Party press; for typical recent examples see *Népszabadság*, 2 October 1987, and 17, 19 October 1987.

82. For press reports in April and May 1988, see *Magyar Nemzet*, *Népszabadság*, *Magyar Hírlap*, and *Népszava*.

83. See decisions of the Party Conference: *A MSZMP országos érkeztetének állásfoglalása ...*, 1-16.

84. *Ibid.*, Part I.1, 7, and interview with Károly Grosz, *Népszabadság*, 16 July 1988, 3.

85. *A MSZMP országos érkeztetének állásfoglalása...* Part I.1 and 2, 8-10.

86. For discussion of speculative alternatives see *Radio Free Europe Research* 8 July 1988, 33-36. See also Roundtable Conference "Alkotmányos rendszerünkről," *Társadalmi Szemle*, No. 12, 1987, 48-63.

87. *Ibid.*, 56.

88. The task forces' draft should be ready for presentation to the Constitutional Committee and the Central Committee by the end of 1988, with further deliberation by them in 1989; detailed blueprints are not available yet. For timetables, see *Népszabadság*, 16 September 1988, 1.

Appendix

For easier understanding of the analysis, an English language translation of a few key paragraphs of the *Standing Orders* of the Hungarian Parliament (*A Magyar Népköztársaság Országgyűlésének ügyrendje*, Budapest: Athenaeum, 1986) is presented.

Paragraph 26

/1/ Proposals to Parliament may be submitted by the Presidential Council, the Council of Ministers, each parliamentary committee and any member of Parliament. The proposals of the committees or of the members' initiation of an enactment, requests for putting an issue on the agenda, etc., form individual motions.

/2/ Proposals, together with their reasoning, shall be submitted in writing to the Speaker of Parliament.

/3/ Parliament places the proposals of the Presidential Council and the Council of Ministers on the agenda.

/4/ A member of Parliament submits his individual motion directly to the appropriate committee of Parliament for purposes of being studied and debated.

/5/ Exceptionally, a member of Parliament may submit his individual proposal to the Speaker in writing not later than eight days prior to the session.

/6/ The Speaker shall present a report on the individual motions to Parliament and make a proposal to place them on the agenda or not. Parliament, after hearing possible comments by the member, makes a decision in the matter without further debate.

Paragraph 37

/1/ Parliament conducts both the general and detailed debate on the bill at the same time. Parliament may resolve to debate the long and medium-term national economic plans and the more significant concepts in two phases: in the first phase it conducts the general debate, and in the second it decides on the acceptance of the plan or concept finalized in the course of the debate. The President of Parliament, the Council of Ministers, the appropriate committee or any member of Parliament may propose the procedure for the debate. All other matters shall be discussed only in general debate.

/2/ The member of Parliament submits amendment proposals in writing to the appropriate committee.

/3/ Exceptionally, the member of Parliament may submit the proposal for amendment to Parliament. The proposal is to be submitted to the President of Parliament no later than eight days prior to the session.

/4/ The President of Parliament submits the proposal for amendment to the appropriate committee in order to allow it to express its opinion prior to debating the bill,

provided the committee has not yet taken a position on it. The member of Parliament and the minister submitting the bill shall be invited to the meeting of the committee.

/5/ The committee considers the proposal and takes a position to support it or not. When presenting the committee's proposal, the referee of the committee summarizes the debate on the proposals for Parliament's information. Reasons for the rejection of modification proposals shall be given only if the Member of Parliament upholds his proposal.

/6/ The committee presents its motion for amendment and its opinion concerning the proposal of the member to the Plenum in writing, and it shall be attached to the member's proposal.

/7/ The representative may change his proposal for amendment during the session of Parliament prior to the conclusion of the debate or he may withdraw it at any time prior to the beginning of voting.

/8/ If the representative changes his amendment proposal, the President passes it to the appropriate committee for its opinion, considering it as a new proposal.

Paragraph 42

/1/ In all issues except those provided in paragraph 5.5 and paragraph 6.1, Parliament decides by open voting.

/2/ If amendments have been proposed to a bill, Parliament first votes on provisions affected by the proposals for amendment, and then on the entire bill.

/3/ If the Council of Ministers disagrees with a proposal for amendment, voting shall first take place on the Council of Ministers' proposal and, thereafter, on the proposal for amendment.

/4/ Any member may move that each proposal for amendment be put to vote separately. Parliament decides upon this motion without debate.

/5/ Voting is done by a show of hands. Whenever doubt arises as to the result of voting, or at the request of any member, the President shall have the votes counted.

/6/ Any member may propose voting by roll-call. Parliament decides upon this proposal without debate.

/7/ Voting by roll-call shall be decreed upon the written motion of at least 30 members.