

Budapest City Council Meeting

The Budapest City Council met on 12th November to discuss the capital's draft plan for 1958. Balman Pongracz, Chairman of the Executive, in his opening speech referred to 7th November and the first anniversary of the formation of the Worker-Peasant Government. The City Council sent a greetings telegram to the Government.

Skili Presents 1958 Plan

Geza Skili, a Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, said in his report that in drafting the 1958 Plan the City Council had enjoyed greater independence than ever before. Of the 717,000,000 forints to be invested in 1958, 517,000,000 forints would be spent on building several new flats and repairing houses. The second greatest claimant on the investment fund was the capital's communication system: 70 new trams, 60 buses and 75 taxis would be put into service. Altogether 148,000,000 forints would be spent on communications. New schools and schoolrooms would be built. Street lighting would be improved, and main roads lit with neon. Major thoroughfares would be repaired and the restoration of the Gellert Embankment would be completed. Eighty million forints would be invested in utilities - much more than in recent years - and 9,000,000 forints would be spent on 'thermal stations' (Note: Presumably for district heating). Measures to better the lot of working women would include special provisions for children's food supplies. Seven million seven hundred thousand forints would be spent on cultural purposes; 4,000,000 forints of this sum would go to rebuild the "Gaiety" Theatre (Vigszinhaz). A new boathouse costing 800,000 forints would be built at the Roman Baths.

It was hoped that between now and the end of next year, 3,178 flats would be finished and the building of 3,000 others begun. In addition to the Council's investments, the Government would grant 152,000,000 forints in long-term loans for house building. This should finance the completion of 1,040 flats and the beginning of 1,000 others.

Skili said that in recent years the number of pupils in general schools has increased by 24 per cent, while the number of classroom places had risen by 15 per cent only. Teaching now had to be done in two shifts. In view of the expected further rise in the number of students, provision must be made for the construction of 100 additional classrooms. The number of classrooms in secondary schools would also be increased by 24. Enterprises under the City Council's authority were expected to produce goods worth over 2,900,000,000 forints. (Budapest 11.00 and 12.00, for Hungarians in W Europe 19.00, and MFI 12.11.57)

Campaign against Alcoholism; Government Asked to Raise Price of Drinks

Skili's report was followed by a debate, in the course of which Dr. Tibor Bakacs spoke of the harmful effects of alcoholism and moved that the City Council should ask the Government to raise the price of alcoholic drinks. The Council agreed to the motion and asked that the extra revenue gained by the State in this way should be spent on health measures. (MFI 12.11.57)

On the following day 'Nepszabadsag' carried an article headed "Families in the Shadow of Drink Shops" which spoke of the tragedies caused by alcoholism in many families and of the concerted efforts of the City's Social Policy Department, the Police, child welfare organisations and individuals to save the children and families concerned. (Budapest 09.00, 13.11.57)

Comments: Budapest's Transport Difficulties

An anonymous home-service commentary, after noting the City Council's housing efforts with approval, went on to say: "There have been many justified complaints about public transport in Budapest. Let us admit it; passenger traffic in the rapidly growing city has for years been unable to satisfy the demand... In 1938, trams and

buses carried 350,000,000 passengers; in 1957, more than a milliard passengers are expected. During this time ... the number of vehicles grew by 37 per cent, as compared with the 300 per cent increase in the number of passengers... This is why in rush hours in the morning and the afternoons passengers cling to the tramcars in elusters... We must also take into consideration the fact that the tram rail network is worn out and there are not enough depot, cleaning and maintenance facilities. This is a great problem, a common problem, which cannot be easily solved. Years of time, a great deal of money, the common work of all of us are required, and meanwhile, patience and consideration." But the bus services were developing, even if not as fast as they should: "We had 226 buses in 1938; today there are 760. On the other hand ... there are still only half as many taxis in the streets of Budapest as there were before the liberation, while the demand has multiplied."

The City Council would therefore spend considerably more on developing public transport in 1958 than in previous years. Seventy new tramcars, 60 "Ikarusz" buses, and 75 taxis would be put into service. The No.2 tram route would be extended, a transformer would be built at Rakospalota and work would begin on a trolleybus depot. Public transport fares in Budapest were "the cheapest in the world". In capitalist countries, "the development of public transport is solved by raising fares". The 1958 Budapest plan did not resort to such means. And even if it did not provide the complete solution to the capital's transport problems - "and this cannot be reasonably and rationally expected in so short a time" - it did represent an encouraging step towards a solution. (Budapest 17.05. 14.11.57)