

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



CONFIDENTIAL

A/AC.88/PV.57
8 April 1957

ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE PROBLEM OF HUNGARY

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIRST PART* OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH MEETING (CLOSED)

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 8 April 1957, at 10.00 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. Alsing ANDERSEN

(Denmark)

PPP. 9600. people. seized in Budapest. deported
or shot without trial. — 980 exec
in Budapest. 17 of his students executed.
Kadar's inability to govern in the provinces
up to Jan. — The Soviet mil. Comm and the
local Rev. Commie duly reorganized did this

RRR

*For the second part of the meeting there will be a summary record (A/AC.88/SR.57)

At the invitation of the Chairman Witness PPP took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I again bid you welcome on behalf of the Committee, and I call upon the representative of Australia who wishes to ask some questions.

Mr. DESCHAMPS (Australia): Can you tell us something more about the work of the Central Committee of Students, what contacts it had with the Government, and other aspects of its work at this time?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): On the day after 23 October we were faced with a completely new situation; there was a current of fear running through all Budapest and amongst the university students, because we did not expect that an armed clash would come out of our peaceful demonstration. On the other hand, we did not expect armed intervention by Russian tanks. It was only then that university and high school students began to organize; in each of the universities students, simply those who had been active in the movements not even the leaders of the students, got together and tried to establish a kind of organization. That is how at the universities the organization, the initials of which are MEFESZ, meaning the Union of University and High School Students, as well as its committees, came into being. These MEFESZ organizations began three or four days later to co-ordinate their work, and that is how in Barnabas Street, in the building of the Piarist School, the Revolutionary University Committee of Budapest was formed. The Revolutionary Committee of University Students issued leaflets and began certain military operations. It also started negotiations with the Government. The most interesting fact was that when the Government called on the representatives of the students to continue negotiations, we simply did not know, for example, who was the leader of the Buda sub-group of the revolutionary university students; a delegation went there, but we did not know who the leader was because he was not named. Everything was improvised during the revolution. The university youths began to organize and issue identification papers around 30 October, and after 1 November some military units were formed, when thanks to General Kiraly and to Kopacsi, who was

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the police commander of Budapest, the university students received arms officially. During the revolution the Central Students Committee had several negotiations with the Government and tried to secure compliance with the demands of the MEFESZ organization, but the Government was always lagging behind; we always said that our demands were two days ahead of the moment when the Government decided to agree to them.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): On what date did you leave Hungary?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): On 7 November 1956. The second Russian attack took place on the 4th, I left three and a half days after that second attack, and I arrived in Vienna on the 8th.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): It is very important to have information on the nature of the violations of human rights which took place in Hungary during this whole period. Did you get any news about that after you left Hungary? Do you know what happened at the political trials? Do you know whether there were such trials of people who participated in the revolution? Do you know anything about the methods of the political police? Did you get any information after your departure from Hungary about the death sentences? It is a fault of us professors to talk too much, but I hope that will not be the case this morning.

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): I should like to speak first of all about the violations of human rights during the revolution. The fact that the Russians violated human rights during the revolution, and the AVH also, whose higher commanders were Russian citizens, is proved by the fact that the larger percentage of those who died heroically during the revolution were civilians. Only a very much smaller proportion were fighters because those who fought naturally did so from a protected position, for example from behind a tank or vehicle. I am far from being a soldier and cannot express myself well. The fighters were in a position to defend themselves up to a point, but a Russian tank drove into a crowd of civilians

standing in line for bread in front of a store, and there were as the Committee knows, those bloody events in Magyarovar and in front of the Parliament house in Budapest when the Russians and the AVH just opened fire on a completely unarmed crowd or on demonstrators who were carrying flags and singing patriotic songs. To refer to the victims of the aerial attacks, the greater proportion of those who died were civilians who were exterminated without mercy by the AVH as well as by the Russians. After 4 November the Russians resorted to the strongest methods, namely military methods, and so were able to crush the revolution of a small country. A country of 200 million inhabitants was able to crush a country of 9 million inhabitants, and I have brought a few photographs taken in Budapest in December for the Committee to see.

(Witness PPP)

I understand that the Committee has already seen some films and will be seeing films prepared in Hungary after the attack of 4 November. I should like to call your attention to the fact that these films show the greatest effects of the aerial attacks. You will see rows of houses burned out after aerial incendiary bombardment. This was not necessary for what they called the punishment of those Fascists, and I therefore say that this was a war conducted by the Russians against civilians otherwise why was the centre of the city of Budapest bombed from the air; why did they have to put heavy artillery on the Gellert mountain to fire at the centre of the city? As I have already said I do not know the exact gauge of these guns but I believe they were 21 mm guns. When I was in Buda I saw this through binoculars from Rozsahegy; the fire was continuous and was aimed at the civilian population. Why was this necessary?

Since then the violation of human rights as contained in the Charter of the United Nations has continued. During and after the revolution, and especially after the revolution, churches and hospitals were deliberately fired on. I have photographs of such incidents and many such have appeared in the world press. An attack against a clinic once involved the death of fifty babies and we are in a position to give concrete data in connection with many cases when the Russians and the AVH carried arms on Red Cross cars. The first such occasion was, as you know, at Sandor Street where the people first obtained arms by opening a Red Cross car carrying weapons for the AVH. At 10.30 p.m. on the Friday after the outbreak of the revolution a car carrying revolutionary university students was going from Calvin Place to another destination and behind it was a car with Red Cross markings. At the Pest side of the bridge both cars were checked and their papers found to be in order, the Red Cross car having proper Red Cross papers. When the university car was in front of the Technical University the Red Cross car started firing with machine-guns and all those in the first car were killed. The car with Red Cross markings then continued on its way. There were several such incidents. Arms were carried even in cars taking the dead to be buried.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): Could you give any information about the political trials after the revolution and the sentences that resulted from them? I am trying to bring some order to this discussion.

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): I should like to state in the interests of truth that the insurgents were also responsible for some atrocities that violated human rights. This was not done deliberately but when the crowd recognized AVH men who had committed atrocities and used mediaeval methods to extort confessions it was impossible to prevent atrocities. I could give details of many cases of people who have suffered such AVH treatment and who had to sign confessions which might result in their being sentenced to death. The AVH then released them and said that if they did not behave and become informers to the AVH the confessions would be used and they would be put to death. I myself was an eye-witness to an incident in which the crowd wanted to lynch such an AVH man. Together with other university people I tried to prevent this but it was impossible for ten university students to prevent a crowd of 5,000 people carrying out this hanging. Our opinion was that everybody should be brought before a tribunal. The upper layer of AVH officers was Russian; the next layer was Hungarian and they fought to their last drop of blood.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): What was the nationality of the victims of the revolutionary crowd -- for example, the victims of the lynchings that could not be avoided?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): The victims of the lynchings were all Hungarians and I was eye-witness to a case when in the middle of the lynching the people let an AVH man go. They spared him because he was Jewish and everybody was very much afraid that this might be taken as a manifestation of anti-Semitism. The Hungarian AVH officers were taken by the students to a detention house in Foe Street with the idea of bringing them before a tribunal, and several soldiers who were in AVH units were allowed to go free. These were honest people of peasant or worker origin and in most cases they did not carry out the orders of their officers to shoot. With the exception, of course, of those who opposed us with arms and who were wiped out in the fighting, these were set free.

After 4 November and three days before my departure on the 7th Russians and AVH people were looking for me at my apartment. Since then I have received the saddest news from Hungarians who are still getting through by various routes from

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Hungary. In Foe Street there is a special Russian committee examining the most important people from the Hungarian Government concerning their activities during the revolution and the rigged trials that are now taking place are only one small aspect of what is going on. According to my information the official statistics show that 9,600 people have been arrested in Budapest and this does not include anybody in prisons or camps outside Budapest or those who have disappeared. These are the official figures of those in prison in Budapest and the number of those who have disappeared is said to be higher. As regards those who have disappeared there are two possibilities according to Russian methods. They have either been taken to the mines in Russia and will never be heard of again or they have been hanged. According to estimates -- and this is not an official figure -- approximately 500 people from the prison in Foe Street have been executed without any judicial process or legal basis, and executed by the most varied methods.

(Witness PPP)

Seventeen of my own students are among those who have been executed; they are from the Barnabas Street and the Revolutionary Councils of the universities, and I can give the names.

The number of those executed in Budapest is around 980. Only those who have become useless for propaganda purposes are executed. Some prisoners are important because they can still be used for propaganda, and they can have a rigged trial. Everything is decided on the basis of how much a person is needed for the purposes of Communism.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): From which source did you obtain this figure of 980 possible executions? Also, where did you obtain the figure of seventeen students who were executed? Were these people executed by the Kadar Government?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): As to the figure of 980 I know this from Hungarians who have come from Budapest and who had, and still have, contacts with some of the people who are employed in the lower grades of the prisons. I do not dare to mention names, but some of these low grade employees are ready to count the numbers in order to give their names whenever possible to the families of the prisoners. I received the information that of my own men students seventeen have been executed.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): Did these executions take place during the revolution, or afterwards in the Kadar regime?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): The executions happened in January. Up till December the people expected that the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Hammarskjold, would arrive in Budapest, and they carried on a united general strike, so the Kadar Government did not have sufficient influence to carry out certain measures. When the people found that the Secretary-General did not come to Hungary, although he had a perfect right to visit a member State without invitation, a terribly desperate mood set in, together with a certain lethargy, and work started in the factories, and people began a passive resistance. It was at that time that the Kadar police terror acquired sufficient power to do what they wanted. Up till then only the Russians had had the power, and the ordinances made by Kadar were not

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forwarded by the post offices of the provincial cities, and the provincial governments did not even carry them out. Nominally the Revolutionary Councils of the individual towns still had some importance but it was only the Russian military command which had the power.

After this, however, the new period of what the Kadar group calls consolidation began and their political organs were again established with the help, not of Hungarians, but as is well-known, of special AVH units coming from Czechoslovakia for the purpose. The AVH was re-established in this way with a completely new Russian command, and it was this new AVH that made the arrests. When they came to look for me in my apartment there was still a mixed Russian-Hungarian group, but after that the arrests were made by Hungarians, operating at night with radio-equipped cars.

I cannot say who carried out the executions but they were by Hungarian, Czechoslovak and Russian units together, I do not know in what proportion. They were directed by the special committee of the Soviets which had its headquarters in Budapest, in Foe Street.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): What attitude was taken by the leaders of the revolutionary movement to put a brake on the crowd and to stop the lynchings about which you spoke?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): During the revolution every one went through a kind of miraculous transformation which I will try to describe briefly. There were about 100,000 spies and agents of the AVH. This was the number of those people who had been compromised by signing documents which were held over their heads so that they should inform the AVH about other people. I myself might have contributed involuntarily to the functioning of this devilish system because I did sometimes give information about somebody, of course not knowing what it was all about. This psychological pressure stopped with the first gunshot, when everyone said the Russians must leave Hungary, for at that moment everyone felt psychologically and physically liberated. From that moment we were all comrades in arms, and this was based on a spirit of clean humanitarianism. As you have been told, it was the crowds themselves who protected the shops against looting. You probably know about the collection of 100 forints; we put down a box in the morning asking people to collect 100 forints for those who had died. The box was unguarded, and in the evening it was collected, and was full.

One of my friends met an acquaintance of his who was a well-known petty thief. This thief was standing on guard in a jewelry shop and he said "Now I am a Hungarian. When our freedom is acquired I shall then resume my honourable profession". We were so careful that every street car, every building, every piece of clothing that was in our hands belonged to the people and not to the Russians. We were extremely careful when firing to do as little damage as possible and not to shoot on plant and industries, on stores and shops. This clean outlook was fostered in the hope that foreign countries would recognize Hungary's desire to be neutral and to remain independent. We knew that if we wanted to form a new country we could not start by looting and killing, and we wanted a lawful state.

It was for that reason that we opposed the killing of the AVH on the street, we wanted to have them tried before tribunals. I realize now that this was a great mistake of ours, because this same AVH are now seeking revenge and are committing the greatest atrocities, this AVH whom we spared. They know that if "the third act" as we call it, starts, none of them will remain alive, and this is the cause of their present atrocities.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): I should like to ask a question of the professor which he need not answer if he does not wish to do so. What are your political opinions as a professor?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): Do you mean the opinions of all the professors?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): What are your own political opinions? You are free to answer or not, as you wish.

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): Do you mean my political opinions as regards the present situation in Hungary or as regards the future of Hungary?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): I refer to your personal political opinions. What were your opinions during the revolution? Did you belong to any political party? Why did you participate in the revolution? You are a professor and as such you must make certain social judgments which may differ from those held by others.

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): When I introduced myself to the Committee I said that I had never been a member of any party and that I participated in the revolution really accidentally and by associating myself with my students. Until that date I had always condemned all revolutionary activities because I was in favour of evolution rather than revolution. Until Geroe made his speech, until the first gunfire was heard in front of the radio building and until we saw the first dead lying in the streets we thought we would try the impossible, that is, we would try to abolish Communism in Hungary by advocating progress and evolution. The first demonstration which took place at the Petoefi memorial really constituted a kind of Titoist ideology, that is a breaking away from the Russians and an attempt at evolution in the direction of nationalism. Of course the final aim was complete independence for Hungary; there is not really more than 5 per cent of the population which is Marxist in Hungary today. I am well acquainted with Communist ideology; as a university professor I was forced to attend courses on Stalinism and Leninism. It was my humiliation that I could not attain a more senior post and further my career because I could not give the correct answers during the periodic examinations on Stalinism and Leninism. In fact I often said that I was ill in order to avoid attending those courses. As I said, I know Communist ideology and I can tell you that it has nothing in common with Marxism. The system introduced by the Russians in Hungary was built entirely on Russian principles. For instance, we were told that we had to be on good terms with the representatives who attended Bandung Conference; we were told that they could be used as Communists and that one person could be played off against

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another. Racial and religious principles were to be based on Communism. Nothing could differ more from Marxist principles. What was an intelligent man to think? The Russian system was based purely on ignorance. For instance if my standard of living was reduced to such an extent that my salary amounted merely to the equivalent of the cost of four pairs of shoes, and if I was told that this was in my personal interest, was I, as an intelligent man, supposed to believe this? Such propaganda could only be believed by the stupid, and I am sure you do not believe it. 80 per cent of all the students admitted to universities had to consist of people of working class or peasant origin; the selection committees would only admit those to the universities.

The CHAIRMAN: However interesting this explanation is, and in my opinion it is extremely interesting, I do suggest that it leads us rather far away from the point.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ -FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): I thank the Chairman for his patience in allowing me to put those questions to the witness. Now I am really going to confine myself to the problem which interests us and have only one more question to ask of the witness. Would you have been in favour of a return to the system which existed at the time of the great landowners?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): Not even one per cent of the people who participated in the revolution wanted to see a return to those conditions. You are probably acquainted with Hungarian history. Hungary formed part of the Habsburg Empire. A feudal system existed for a long time before the revolution of 1848; the aim of that revolution was the abolition of feudalism and serfdom. Sandor Petoefi and Lajos Kossuth were active in furthering those aims. The serfs were liberated but the system of large landownership continued and therefore the land reform which was established in 1945 met with approval from all political parties. Nobody was in favour of a return to private ownership. Everybody was in favour of private industry and the maintaining of cottage industries whereby peasants who owned, and worked, five or ten acres of land should be permitted to buy more land if they were capable of increasing agricultural

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production thereby. We wanted to model ourselves on the Danish system and to introduce agricultural co-operatives; we certainly did not want a return to the former agricultural system. We aimed at establishing a socialist state in which material equality would exist -- or at least, where the differences in equality would not be so great. We often emphasized the fact that if the revolution should succeed Hungary would become a really model State in terms of the Western socialist conceptions. In my opinion, the whole world is tending in that direction.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): As far as you know, did any member of the Catholic Church, during or before the revolution, demand that the large estates which had formerly belonged to the church be returned to it?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): If you will permit me to say so, I believe the representative of Uruguay is probably hinting at the activities of Cardinal Mindszenty. In fact, all the possessions of all the churches were confiscated and the church, as such, became entirely dependent on the State. It is true that before the war the Catholic Church owned the largest properties but the Protestant and Jewish Churches also owned some property. The Communist State confiscated all those properties because it felt that if the ownership of them lay in other hands the State became dependent on those owners and would enable them to revenge themselves on the State. In fact, the Communists felt that the sword of Damocles would be hanging over their heads. Thus, the economic consequences were very grave for the church. The wish of the church parishes to regain a little of their lands was recognized and approved by all but there was no question of returning the great estates. I spoke to Cardinal Mindszenty two days before the Russian attack and we discussed these questions. He did not want the return of the large properties at all. However, the Catholic educational institutions had been given the responsibility, under the socialist system, of educating the children of the poor which had heretofore been financed by income received from church lands. The return of such lands would have given the church sufficient independence to enable it to continue those educational activities, but, as I said, there was no question of a return to the system of ownership of large estates which had existed during the pre-war years.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): I would like to say that I was not speaking of the Catholic Church or any particular church but of an economic principle. I would like to thank the witness very much for answering my questions and I would like to thank the Chairman for allowing me to put these questions.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): I would like to clarify my understanding of the long statement made by the witness and perhaps he could specify certain points in more detail.

He spoke to us of the first meeting on the evening of 23 October to which he was called and at which he prepared the first draft of the Declaration, am I correct in thinking that it was 22 October that he referred to?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes. The meeting was held on the 22nd from two o'clock in the afternoon until after midnight.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): The Witness said that during the discussions that took place on that day there were speakers who demanded the withdrawal of the Russian troops. Could he give us more details about that?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): Unfortunately, I did not know that there would be any need for this and I have not prepared any notes but from memory I remember it was about 4.30 or five o'clock in the afternoon when the speakers began to delve more deeply into basic questions. They said, for instance, "They will not allow English, French or German to be taught in the schools but only Russian." "The system is never allowed to change basically because they will not make any concessions. We know their aims because we have read them in Lenin's and Stalin's books". We realized that the subjects we wanted taught in the schools would be the most effective opposition to Communism and we realized that was one reason why they would not make concessions. Therefore, the students said that there must be basic changes. As long as there were Soviet troops in Hungary they would never allow free or secret elections for instance. It would be impossible as of necessity it has to be merely a form of play acting.

(Witness PPP)

It was from such deductions as this that the students came to the basic question, namely, the ensuring of human rights and Hungarian independence. They were the basic things but as long as there were Russian troops in Hungary there would be no freedom of speech, no freedom of religion and no freedom for the individual. For instance, law, in the real sense of the word, did not exist, as anyone could be arrested at any time without any reason. From 4.30 to 7.30 as long as I was there these basic questions were thoroughly discussed.

This free discussion by the students naturally did not go unopposed. Janos Simon, the university Party secretary, and Mrs. Orban, the Communist agitator who was the wife of the Deputy Minister of Education, both spoke against this, and also the Communist rector of the university, Laszlo Gabor. However, the students were not to be stopped and with cat-calls, hisses and boos they drove these people from the microphone. I should say that these three attempts were the only ones made during the whole twelve hours of this meeting.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): Does the witness believe that this idea that all Russians should be withdrawn which started on the eve of the 23rd caused the reaction of more troops being brought into Budapest on the 23rd?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): I have in my possession a piece of information according to which no one expected the revolution except the Russians. This information is as follows: the students who finished school the year before were forced into the army for a few months to take engineering training courses. They reported for active duty at Budapest on 1 October and their training was to be at Budapest. When the university students started to take part in political activities increasingly in the middle of October I think it is probable that the Government realized the students were becoming unreliable although up to that time the Government considered that its greatest support came from the students. As I have mentioned before 80 per cent of them were the children of workers and peasants and appeared to be Communists. Before 22 October these newly formed students' groups in the army were taken out of Budapest and the barracks were left empty. On 26 October, in the evening, these boys arrived back from Erosi which is south of Budapest having left their improvised quarters. They said they had been kept under lock and key the whole time but on hearing of the events they broke out and came to Budapest to the Technical University to join the other students. This seems to prove

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that the Russians knew something was going to happen and in my opinion this was probably Geroe's speech. If their enemies are unknown to them their usual method of finding out who they are is to provoke them and presumably this is what Geroe's speech was designed to do although he could never have visualised that 98 per cent of the people would prove themselves to be enemies of Communism. It is for this reason that we believe the unreliable Hungarian troops had already been taken away from Budapest. I am not a soldier and I do not know what kind of units they were but I heard from military experts that Russian troops had already been prepared and were under orders which had cancelled all leaves several days before the events of 23 October. This may, of course, have been a continuous situation — I cannot judge that — but it is conceivable that these arrangements were made because they expected trouble.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): When the witness spoke of the events that took place just before Geroe's speech he described a completely peaceful demonstration then he said that the pacifist feeling of the crowd was suddenly transformed into a revolt. In his opinion was it really Geroe's speech that caused this transformation in the mood of the people?

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): My conviction is that it was Geroe's speech which caused their final bitterness to explode because on the whole after the demonstration in front of the Bem statue the workers went through Budapest with flags and demanded that Imre Nagy should be put into the Government, that Russian troops should be withdrawn from Hungary, and Soviet and Hungarian friendship on the basis of equality. However, during Geroe's speech people either went home as I did or as there were many people still on the streets they listened to the speech from radios which had been placed by the people on their window sills. After Geroe's speech suddenly everyone started crying out "Down with Geroe", "Death to Geroe", "Let us go to the radio building", "Let us go to the Stalin statue", and that is when the revolutionary feeling started. Up to that time people thought they had started a process of development against oppression and towards independence but it was obvious that Geroe wanted to retain this oppression and the people were against it.

The CHAIRMAN: There are no further questions and we thank you once more for your interesting answers.

WITNESS PPP (interpretation from Hungarian): If the Chairman permits I would like to make a request. The inequalities and arrests I have mentioned are still going on today in Hungary. The deportations have started again. They are not now deporting people they arrest in the streets but they are going from house to house and the leaders of the revolution or people who worked for the revolution who are outside Hungary have relatives who are being deported. I would like to ask the Chairman to try to do what he can in his capacity as Chairman of this Committee to stop these deportations and arrests pending the presentation of the Committee's Report to the General Assembly. This intervention should be made not in Hungary but in Moscow because Budapest cannot do anything independently but can only act on orders from Moscow. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you

Witness PPP withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Witness RRR took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Committee I bid you welcome. I understand you wish to remain anonymous and I ask you to begin your statement.

WITNESS RRR (interpretation from Hungarian): In the first place I would like to say a few words about the tactics of the Hungarian Communist Party from 1945 to 1 January 1948, and in the period from then until 1953. I was a member of the Communist Party in Hungary from 1938, and as a member on an illegal basis of the thirteenth district Communist Party worked under the aegis of the Social Democratic Party. Later I worked in the left-wing of the Social Democratic Party which was fused with the Communist Party in 1948. I was also a full member of the Communist Party itself. On 17 January 1945 Zoltan Vas appeared at the Party headquarters of the thirteenth district and took up collections with the thirteenth district party organization and myself in order to organize that party district further. I later received another post, becoming a director of the Celsius Thermometer Factory. It was through this post that I carried out other party duties, amongst them the duty of trying to win over the industrial workers to the spirit and aims of the Communist Party. The party used as their tactics in their first years land reform for the purpose of gaining hold of the peasants. They tried to win over the industrial workers by the hope of owning the means of production and thereby guaranteeing to them a higher standard of living than that prevailing in 1938. This programme had of course a strong appeal at that time and gained a considerable following. The nationalization of the banks and of heavy industry generally was approved by the workers, as nationalization had already occurred in western capitalist countries. Later on the nationalization of the smaller industries was begun, and this did not create any great opposition on the part of the workers, but in 1949 certain other kinds of industries were nationalized. For example, after I left the party I myself established a small industry in which only my wife and one apprentice worked, but even that was nationalized. I know that this was really a reprisal for my having left the party.

In the period from 1948 to 1953 the trend of the direction in the party was to force the workers to greater effort and higher production through lower wages.

(Witness RRR)

All the workers were of course opposed to this. In connection with this idea the motto of the party was that in a socialist society there is no place for a workers' aristocracy.

I and many other former Communists did not of course agree any longer with this type of thinking, and we started opposing it vigorously. Naturally, in the social structure which was forming between 1948 and 1953, nothing very much could be said aloud, and even the most intimate conversations were reported to the leadership of the party.

I would like to say a little now about the 1947 election, I was secretary of the third sub-district of the twelfth district of Budapest, prepared the elections and was in charge of them. In the middle of the election campaign I received certain party instructions with which I did not agree. I expressed my opinion to some of the high officials of the party and was subsequently called in to the famous personnel department, of which Kadar was then the head. He told me that I should be concerned first of all with party discipline, and that if I did not like it I must take the consequences. I continued to participate in the election campaign until the day before the election. At that time I was not a Hungarian citizen and knew I could not vote, the Hungarian authorities had not given me the right to vote. However, a party delegation came to me at midnight with a document, and I was told that if I signed it I would become a Hungarian citizen in half an hour and would receive the right to vote. As many things displeased me and I had certain principles, I replied that I would not change my nationality at that stage, and that as a foreigner I could carry out many services in the interests of socialism. After considerable discussion they retired, but at 4 a.m. they came to me again with the order that an hour later, at 5 a.m., I should report to a meeting of the party headquarters of the twelfth district, where several people would be given pieces of blue paper with which they could vote in the provinces. I refused so far as I was concerned, because it was incompatible with my principles. My principle, so far as the election was concerned, was that I should represent the party and try to secure the best results for it through Communist methods. Naturally, my action in refusing to go to the provinces and vote brought about certain consequences and I did not go unpunished; I received several reprimands, and it was only thanks to my connections

(Witness RRR)

with Istvan Kosa and Zoltan Vas, and through their personal intervention, that I was able to continue without being formally accused. Accordingly I was forgiven for not wanting to participate on a false basis with these blue papers in the election. It was by means of 40,000 to 50,000 such falsified returns that the Communist Party was able to obtain power.

On 24 October 1947 I returned my party card with an explanation in a registered letter to Rakosi, saying "Having looked into my conscience, and studied the disciplinary measures of the party, I have come to the conclusion that my place is not among the members of the Hungarian Communist Party."

That is the end of this part of my statement and I should now like to be allowed to describe the events of the first days of the revolution and especially the period 27 October to 4 November.

Despite continuous Soviet propaganda, this was a revolution and not a counter-revolution or the plundering of Fascist bandits. This is proved by the fact that the Hungarian revolution was not planned from the outside by foreigners because if that had been the case much greater results would have been achieved and there would not have been so many independent actions but we would have been able to act in a much more organized manner. It is true that everything started in front of the radio building and I was there when the first shots were fired. There were some answering shots from army people when the bodies of the first martyrs of the revolution were already covered by tricolour flags. It was then we went to get arms and got some from the police and the army -- arms that were necessary to hold in check the AVH people who were in the building.

In the early morning of 24 October we saw the first Russian army vehicles and armoured cars and realized that it was a question not only of defeating the AVH but of achieving a much difficult victory. During the first days we suffered severe losses but we also inflicted losses on the Russian troops. Several tanks and armoured cars were destroyed around the National Theatre in Rakoczy Street, and in other parts of the outskirts of Budapest. We did not see the political situation clearly after Imre Nagy's speech of 24 October and we did not know who had called in the Russian troops. At that time people were cursing Nagy for having called them in and said the same thing was happening as in 1848, that the Russians were coming to oppress us. All calls by the Government to lay down arms were received with great indignation and were not obeyed.

On 26 October I went to the corner of Rakoczy Street and Muzium Street where I heard about Russian tanks coming over to our side. When I reached that place I realized that this news was true and the Russian tanks really did carry Hungarian colours and were full of Hungarian youths, workers, girls and students who were singing the Kossuth song and the national anthem. When we asked the Russian soldiers what was happening they said: "We can now see that we are not fighting against bandits; we see that the people are out in the streets and that we are fighting against the people. We do not want to fight against you." I do not know how sincere this was -- perhaps they had just run out of ammunition -- but this is what they said to us and they too tried to sing the Kossuth song with us. They asked

where they should go next and we said we would all go to the front of the Parliament Building. The four Russian army vehicles started off and the crowd tried to get on to other trucks as well, and all together we went towards Parliament through Muzeum Street, and Bajcsi-Zsilinszky Street, where tearful people were greeting us and celebrating with new flags.

That is how we reached the square in front of Parliament. We wanted to speak with the Government, and then came the sneak attack by the AVH from the top of the Ministry of Agriculture which I am sure you know about and which will go down in Hungarian history as the fateful battle of Parliament Square. I can declare on oath that we went there without a single weapon; we wanted to avoid any possibility of provocation. Unarmed women, workers and others died there and I believe the reason I remained alive when others around me died is that I still have certain accounts to settle.

On 29 October 1956 the Union of Ironmongers took a resolution and appointed a delegation, of which I was a member, to go to Parliament and ask Imre Nagy what the position of the Government was. The position of the Government was ascertained by us through personal conversation with Imre Nagy, Zoltan Tildy and other statesmen. They clarified the situation and told us that on the 27th Imre Nagy was freed from the control of the AVH and that only from that date was he responsible himself for his decisions. My instructions and those of the rest of the delegation were that, if we received the necessary assurances from the Government that they were supporting the demands of the Hungarian people and of the workers, we should support the Government. I went several times to Parliament and after these negotiations and continuous contact with delegates from other industries we decided on 1 November that we would do everything possible to strengthen the position of the Government in internal and external affairs and that for this reason it was absolutely necessary to end the strike. We were told that the maintenance of this strike was against our own interests and would only help the Russians both politically and militarily because our own military position was weakened if our essential industries did not function fully and the other industries did not function at all, and politically what could happen was that the Russians would appear to have a legal basis for fresh intervention, arguing that if the industrial workers were striking against the Government the workers must be against the policy of the Government. That is why we made an appeal to the workers of which I was one of the drafters. It was read over the radio and appeared in the press and I would like to read it to you now.

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(Witness RRR)

"Miners, industrial workers, communications workers and intellectual workers: The delegates from the large industries of Budapest have had meetings and negotiations in Parliament with members of the Government about the withdrawal of Russian troops, the present situation of the country and the resumption of normal work. The Government has completely accepted the main points of our demands. It has asked the General Assembly of the United Nations to examine the military intervention of the Soviet Union and the situation created by that intervention. It has denounced the Warsaw Pact. It has proclaimed the neutrality of Hungary and has asked that the four great powers, namely the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain and France, should guarantee this. It has announced that it will without delay start preparations for free and secret elections.

"The economic situation of the country makes it evident to the delegations that a continuance of the strike would mean a complete stoppage of any kind of economic life in Hungary and would undermine the achievements of the revolution.

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"The delegates, however, saw also that they would give strength to the Hungarian Government if work were started again, and that the resumption of work would be fully justified in view of the assurances given by the Government.

"Our public life is endangered by the strike, our supply of electricity and of essential foodstuffs is threatened. The situation of the wounded freedom fighters is serious and it is with a deep sense of responsibility towards our country and our revolution that we decided that work in every sphere should be started again, and we are asking all the workers of the country to respond to our appeal to start work again".

This appeal was signed by the revolutionary committee of the workers and was counter-signed by Maleter, the Defence Minister, and this was done at my request because his name was so trustworthy from the point of view of the revolution. I knew that if I went back to the industries and plants I represented they would surely agree that the resumption of work was absolutely necessary if Maleter's signature appeared on the appeal.

I had several experiences in Parliament, such as my talk with Zoltan Tildy. He told me that he had only been there for a few days but had not slept for four days. He said he only asked that God should give him strength sufficient to lead the country out of the situation which might prove to be the most grave in the history of Hungary. He said he would resign from all his offices in public life, and retire, so that it should not be said later that he had entered into the revolution in order to secure his own advancement. He said he wanted to retire into private life and educate his grandchildren.

I also had several conversations with Zoltan Vas. I learned from him what an uneconomic and disadvantageous relationship existed between the Soviet Union and Hungary. I also learned from him the true value of Hungary's uranium ore, which the leaders of the present regime have tried to minimise; the latest press reports say the Soviet Union wants to invest a huge sum in the exploitation of Hungarian uranium ore and to take the whole of its production. I was told in Parliament, and also given certain chemical data, showing that Hungary's refined uranium was far superior to the uranium of the Belgian Congo. This was indeed a very striking piece of information for us, and it confirmed what Imre Nagy said in my presence that it would have been better if this uranium ore had been discovered later,

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because a satisfactory outcome of the situation with the Soviet Union would be made much more difficult by the existence of this ore.

I should like to say a little about the relationship between the peasants and the Government and their role in the revolution, why they were not more active. The peasants had their own task, and their own battle to fight. They had to face the trials of the production collectives, and general collectivization that had been going on for years. They did not want to go on in this way, and in addition to trying to dissolve these collectives, their other principal task during the revolution was to help the fighters with food supplies. In addition to these two objects, they had some armed battles in which they participated, but these were not of the same significance as the battles of the industrial workers.

One village after another sent food supplies by truck without accepting any payment. These supplies were distributed to hospitals as well as to private houses and anybody who had the need. Many such food shipments were taken away by the Russians together with the cars which held them and in many cases these cars were never returned to the Hungarians.

I was an eye-witness of the dissolution of one of the collectives, and I saw the happiness of the peasants when finally they could plant what they wanted and what they found most appropriate and would not have to obey orders from above. They were all sure they would be able to achieve higher productivity, and there would not be the same decline in agriculture as during forced collectivization. I spoke to peasants who were small landowners who told me that often their hearts had bled when they had received orders from above that they must plant certain crops and do certain agricultural operations at certain times which were not the right times and would result in smaller production. Anyone who did not execute these orders was immediately accused of being an imperialist agent, a Kulak, or of Kulak origin and against the people's democracy. Many of them therefore contrary to their better judgment had to satisfy the orders coming from above and the latter never took any account of the situation of the land and the climate, but regarded agriculture only globally. The peasantry at this time when it was trying to dissolve the forced collectives, opposed the Soviet orders, and stood in its entirety on the side of the revolution.

(Witness RRR)

I should like to say a word about the role of Kadar and his clique. I met Kadar in 1947 when he took disciplinary action against me several times. One could see at that time that even though he was most careful to camouflage it, he had a great deal of arbitrary will-power, though he carried out orders in a most servile way. His part in the events of October and November was important for the Soviets and it became desirable to groom him for an executive role in public life. We all know that Kadar himself was a victim of Rakosi's regime, and he himself was in prison, and suffered a good deal. Nevertheless his whole conception of life was closely linked with the dictatorial system; he was opposed to any conception of public life which would have led to any kind of democratization of institutions, so he used and enforced dictatorial methods against the true interests of the people.

(Witness RRR)

On 27 October the so-called "Suslov meetings" took place which led to meetings between Kadar and Imre Nagy. I am able to give you an account of those meetings. Suslov first of all asked Kadar for his opinion of Nagy's policies. Kadar answered that Nagy was an opportunist and was dangerous from the point of view of a proletarian dictatorship and was not therefore unfit to assume leadership. However in view of the mood of the revolution at that time, it was necessary, from Kadar's point of view, that Nagy should continue at the head of the Government for a short while. Subsequently, Suslov held meetings with Imre Nagy during which he asked for assurances that the Government policy would be kept in line with Soviet policy and would be permeated with feelings of friendship for the Soviet Union. Nagy answered that he and the Government felt that it was the people's wish — and he, Nagy, represented the people — that friendly relations between Hungary and the Soviet Union should be maintained but that Hungary should isolate itself slightly from the Soviet Union and open the door to the West. In short, Nagy felt that if friendly relations were established with other countries he would be serving the cause of peace and also benefiting the Soviet Union thereby. Suslov was dissatisfied with that statement and expressed his doubts by saying: "Will not the Rightist elements which came to the fore during the revolution destroy the Government of the people?". Nagy answered that this was liable to happen during all revolutions — he quoted the revolution of 1917 in Russia as an example — and admitted the existence of certain exaggeratedly extreme elements. In this connexion he did mention several anarchist groups, the activities of which were unavoidable during a revolution. However he was ready to state, on the basis of conversations which he had had with workers' delegations, that every stratum of the population — including the workers — was prepared to accept him and to consider him as their leader. He continued by saying that his political beliefs were well-known to Comrade Suslov and that he felt himself in the position of being able to stabilize the situation. On 27 October Suslov had another meeting with Kadar whom he informed that in his opinion — and he intended to let that opinion be known to the members of the Central Communist Party — the time would shortly come when it would be necessary to adopt a more rigid policy. It was also his opinion that Nagy was unfit to pursue such a policy; the role of Kadar would therefore become very important. Suslov then asked Kadar to prepare

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himself for that role. Those talks could be considered as a preliminary basis for the events which took place on 4 November. It was my opinion, which was shared by Maleter, Bela Kiraly and other responsible statesmen including Imre Nagy, that the attack made by the Soviets on 4 November was premature. They were not sufficiently organized for such an attack -- why therefore did they do it so soon? I think that our appeal to the workers to resume work on 5 November precipitated the attack. If the Soviets had intervened when work had already been resumed, when the factories had resumed the normal pace of production and when communications had been re-established, then their political position would have been very much weaker. The Hungarian military command, knowing that the Soviets were not fully prepared from a military point of view to intervene on 4 November, were taken unawares. You may know that when the Russians attacked on the 4th the tanks were well in advance of the infantry because the latter had not had time to reach the tanks. If the infantry had been able to attack at the same time as the tanks the Hungarian revolution could have been subdued in one day. That was the opinion of all the military strategists, and although I am not one, I agree. The Russians knew that it was a race between themselves and the Hungarians and for this reason they were prepared to face greater losses by starting their attack in the early hours of 4 November before work had already recommenced. In fact, Kadar had not yet delivered his famous speech and it would seem that he also was taken unawares by the Soviet attack otherwise he would have proclaimed the existence of his Government before the Russians intervened.

I refer now to my personal experiences on 4 November. I was not in Parliament that day but at home. After the first gunfire had started I took my family to the cellar, said goodbye to them, and joined my fighting unit, which I had organized and which was stationed in the fourteenth district. We then tried to delay the Soviet advance. There were two lines of Soviet armed units and I am afraid we were not very successful in impeding their advance. We did not have sufficient weapons; we only had some light arms, hand grenades and a few Molotov cocktails. With these we succeeded in destroying four armed vehicles in Egressy Street and near Bosnyak Place. We were able to establish our headquarters in a school in Szazados Street and held Kerepesi Street under fire. The school was completely destroyed and we had to retreat, suffering heavy losses. We gradually infiltrated in Bosnyak Place and after some

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fighting we penetrated farther into the city. On 7 November we arrived at the medical institute of the university and from there we engaged in fighting with the Soviet armed cars, tanks and the infantry who, by that time, had reached the armoured units. We captured two truck loads of ammunition and a light cannon; with those weapons we continued to fight and inflict losses on the enemy.

(Witness RRR)

I should like to say a few words in connection with the AVH to explain the organization of the AVH from the political point of view and how they functioned financially.

The personnel department of the AVH hired certain very reliable people who were carefully screened not only by the Hungarians but also by the NKVD of the Soviet. Without this special Soviet screening nobody could be employed in a confidential position in the AVH. You probably already know that the AVH troops that had special assignments that were in fact -- I can state it clearly -- highway murderers received a much higher salary than the other AVH people. You may be interested to know how this increased salary was paid in practice. All officers and men in this special unit received the same salary slip as the others but from a secret fund they received approximately five or six times more as a bonus. You may like to know where this finance came from. I have certain information from the AVH about their bookkeeping and for bookkeeping purposes this extra expenditure was put down under the heading of construction of new buildings or the furnishing of buildings and of course this was all done on the basis of falsified invoices. The amounts that consequently became available were managed by a triumvirate of AVH people and were dealt with confidentially by separate bookkeeping methods. It was on the basis of decisions taken by this triumvirate that the special groups of personnel received their bonuses.

I should now like to say a word about the role of General Pal Maleter. It was the Nagy Government strongly controlled by the AVH that sent Maleter to the Kilian barracks. As an active officer of the army Maleter received an order not from Nagy but from the AVH and this order said that as there were bandits engaged in looting around the barracks these bandits should be killed. In good faith Maleter took this order at its face value and it was only after two days that he realized there was no question of looting bandits as the jewellery shops although the windows were admittedly broken were untouched. It came to his knowledge that no looting was being carried on in the city but that he was faced here with a popular revolution and uprising and through his conversations with the Corvin group they informed him of the political basis and the aims of the revolution. Maleter then went over to the side of the revolution and he led one of the heaviest battles against Soviet tanks.

(Witness RRR)

You may ask, why was he sent to the military negotiations with the Russians? On 1 November 1956 he was not yet officially Minister of Defence, simply a deputy Minister, but in practice he was already the Minister of Defence. The Government had complete confidence in him and we, the workers' delegates and armed revolutionary units, were also recommending him for this role, therefore the Government sent him to these negotiations. As one of the statesmen said to me "We do not want to send an officer of the General Staff as we might have the disagreeable surprise of discovering that contrary to the intentions of the Government and in the name of the Government he had traitorously concluded an alliance with the Soviet General Staff." This is the explanation of why Maleter as Minister of Defence went to these military negotiations and tried to come to a military agreement, an agreement, as Antropov said to Imre Nagy, that was related only to the security of Soviet troops during the withdrawal and which had no political significance at all. As Antropov further explained the Russian Government wanted to act only in the spirit of their declaration of 30 October and it was only in view of negotiations as to technical details and in the interests of safeguarding Soviet prestige that a technical discussion was necessary at all. At that moment it seemed that the politics of Imre Nagy would be crowned with success in so far as these military negotiations took place and that consequently the danger that the Soviet would not accept the revolution would disappear. It was therefore very reassuring, as Imre Nagy himself said, that matters were going this way and it seemed possible that the greatest danger to Hungary would be removed.

I have finished what I wanted to say and I would like to thank you for listening to me.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank you very much for your statement. I would like to ask you a few questions as to the falsification of the election results in 1947. I would like to ask you whether a person with a blue card could vote as many times as he wished in different districts?

WITNESS RRR (interpretation from Hungarian): At the 1947 elections if a person had a blue card he could vote only once. However, this did not mean anything as you could have thirty-two blue cards. During the course of one day,

(Witness RRR)

from eight o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock in the evening, you could get a number of cards and I know several people who did.

The CHAIRMAN: You mentioned the figure of 40,000 to 50,000; I do not know exactly whether you meant that 40,000 to 50,000 blue cards were distributed.

WITNESS RRR (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes. This means that there were so many false votes. At that time differences arose through this between the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party and between Rajk and Istvan Riesz. Riesz sharply criticized these excesses and Rajk supported them. Rajk came out very strongly in favour of protecting those people who were accused by the other parties of having voted at several places with these blue cards. Rakosi tried to persuade the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party to settle this matter and come to an agreement.

The CHAIRMAN: How could you know that the figure of false votes was about 40,000 to 50,000?

WITNESS RRR (interpretation from Hungarian): My data is derived in this way. I in my district would have been able to vote with thirty blue cards and apart from that people were going by truck to other districts and from there they were taken further on. In my own district there were several people who had these cards and through my contacts and connections in the party I knew of such procedures in different districts of Budapest. There were people who approved of this cynically and there were others, like myself, who were against it. I know from my own knowledge of several districts how many people participated in this operation. The senior people in the Hungarian Communist Party often said to me "Yes, your calculations are right but this is one way of battling and it does belong to the materialistic dialectics of how we should understand elections. In a battle of this nature one should not look at the type of arms one uses for victory."

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. As the Rapporteur would like to have a discussion on the business of the Committee we cannot proceed any further today, but as I think there will be some questions, at least with regard to Suslov's, Kadar's and Nagy's conversations, I would ask whether you can appear again before the Committee tomorrow, Tuesday, at 10 a.m.

WITNESS RRR (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, I can come because the reason for my coming to Geneva and to your Committee is, by telling the truth, to be able to make propaganda for the Hungarian people -- but by telling the truth.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We will see you again tomorrow morning.
Witness RRR withdrew.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.