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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE PROBLEM OF HUNGARY

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FORTY-NINTH MEETING (CLOSED)

Held at 1, Wallnerstrasse 6A, Vienna,
on Wednesday, 27 March 1957, at 3.00 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. Alsing ANDERSEN

(Denmark)

AAA - AVH atrocities, Russians forced by officers on 11 January at Csepel.

DDD of Prosecutor's Office tried to free Hungarian from Soviet camps. Chief Prosecutor forced to resign. Prosecutors seized by R

FFF Csepel W. Council repres. Fighting on 4 Nov. workers would not obey Council. Kadar obstructs W. Council. Russian inter. in factory demands to Kadar 17 Nov. Meeting of 8 Jan. Fighting of 11 Jan.

GGG. Some of persons seized from Yugo Embassy with Nagy.

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

The CHAIRMAN: I bid the witness welcome. I understand you are a typist who witnessed atrocities committed by Russian soldiers on 4 November, including the summary execution of eight freedom fighters with three of whom you were personally acquainted. Will you please give us your testimony about the events of which you have personal knowledge.

WITNESS ZZ (interpretation from Hungarian): At 7 a.m. on 4 November I left my apartment near the western railway station to go to my child who was at Koebanya. A woman, who was pregnant about seven or eight months, joined me, and as we left Koebanya Street Russian armoured cars on the other side of the street fired after us. The pregnant woman standing next to me was killed immediately. My clothes were burned and I fled into a neighbouring house.

In the afternoon of 4 November six freedom fighters were trying to join their families at Pongracz Street. They wanted to go through the territory of the commercial exhibition, and as they tried to enter their building they saw it was surrounded by the AVH and Russian armoured cars. The AVH opened fire on the eight boys who, when they saw they were faced with an overwhelming force, used white pieces of their shirts in token of surrender. They were captured, placed in front of the door of the house, and every one was shot and killed. I knew all four of them personally. The first was Otto Drexler, the second Istvan Feher, the third Gyula Szabo and the fourth Istvan Pinczker. Afterwards I went immediately to their families telling them what had happened and that their sons had been shot. The parents went to remove the bodies, and when we reached the spot the AVH put a piece of paper in the neck of each of the bodies, "This is the fate of every insurgent".

I have now finished my testimony and am ready to answer questions.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank you very much. I understand that you personally witnessed this incident.

WITNESS ZZ (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, I saw it with my own eyes as I was going home.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Was it only the AVH or only Russian soldiers or both who fired?

WITNESS ZZ (interpretation from Hungarian): When the boys were put in front of the door both Russian soldiers and AVH people fired. It was mostly the AVH where this occurred.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Did the AVH know the freedom fighters?

WITNESS ZZ (interpretation from Hungarian): No, they did not know them personally, but every freedom fighter could be recognized.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions?

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I did not quite understand what you meant by saying, if that is what you said, that a piece of paper was put in the necks of those freedom fighters.

WITNESS ZZ (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, that is what I said. When I went with the parents to look at the eight bodies they had in their necks a little piece of paper saying "This is the fate of every insurgent". In order that the bodies should serve as an example they were not allowed to be removed for two days.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): Do you know whether that — the use of a piece of paper in that way — happened to many people who were shot?

WITNESS ZZ (interpretation from Hungarian): It could be seen at several places. I saw it at about three places when I myself was walking.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions? There are none, so we thank you for your statement.

WITNESS ZZ (interpretation from Hungarian): I also would like to thank the Committee for their patience. In my own name and that of my husband whom you heard earlier, and in the name of my people I thank you, and hope that our people, who have a Christian culture of thousands of years, will be able to survive and that we shall have helped them in this survival. I call on God to help you in your task.

Witness ZZ withdrew.

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

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Committee I bid you welcome. We know from the notes which you have given to the Secretariat that you worked as a stenographer for the AVH and know exactly their procedure. We will therefore be very interested in your testimony on this very important question, and so we ask you to give us your statement.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): When I took a job at the AVH at Andrassy Street I was not yet sixteen years old and at that age I did not know how to evaluate political events. I was there for about one and a half years and could speak at great length about what occurred during that time. It would be impossible to tell briefly all that happened so I will only mention some outstanding points. The prison at No. 60 Andrassy Street consisted of two rooms where the prisoners were so crowded that they could not sit down. Naturally they could not keep themselves clean. They were hungry and thirsty and suffered from contagious diseases because there was no provision for keeping the place clean. The prisoners included children as young as thirteen and pregnant women and they were there not for one or two weeks but sometimes for months without their relatives knowing. Sometimes when I left the building after working hours a woman would stop me and ask if her husband, who had disappeared six weeks ago, was there. Of course, I did not dare to say although I knew he was there because there were spies everywhere; there were even spies among the prisoners, put there to obtain information.

The methods of torture were most inhuman and were reminiscent of the darkest barbarian ages. What horrified me most was what happened to a thirteen-year old child. They beat him for a whole week until he could not stand. He became very ill and had several broken bones. They took him to the prison hospital, where he was kept for three or four weeks, and they started all over again. His crime was that his father was a member of the Hungarian Nazi Party and that the child had lived with him, but as he was only eleven or twelve years old at the time he could hardly be held responsible. Among this crowd in the prison many women gave birth to children.

You may know the name of the doctor there because he fell after the Rajk affair. His cruelty was beyond belief. When a man died under torture -- and I do not want to detail here what the tortures were -- this doctor would certify that the man had committed suicide or had a heart attack. When they threw somebody out of a window they always said he had had a heart attack. The cemetery was behind the prison hospital and people were simply thrown in a hole there. I could go on like this but I am sure you know most of it, and if you wish to ask questions I will gladly answer them.

When I had been there about a year and a half I disobeyed an order. I was unable to type while they were beating somebody as I felt sick, and as a consequence

I was removed. I stayed with the police but at the headquarters, and then I went to the foreign affairs police and afterwards to the disciplinary section of the police. The head of this department was a Social Democrat who had absolutely no authority. He was only there because he was a Social Democrat. His deputy was a communist who had full power and everybody was under the influence of this person. The task of the disciplinary section was to discipline those members of the police who committed breaches, but this was not done and if the police committed a breach of discipline they just let it go. For example at Ujpest a man was beaten up, all his teeth were knocked out and his heels were bludgeoned with a rubber truncheon for so long that, as he himself said, his feet opened like a rose. This man was finally released from prison but the policeman who beat him up was only told by his superiors that he was a fool not to have used methods that would leave less mark and asked if he did not know a better way of doing it. No disciplinary action was taken against him.

While I was at 60 Andrassy Street a member of the AVH shot a man he was supposed to bring in alive to the station. He had to report this and although the man he had killed was rather important his only punishment was to be transferred to a newspaper called Friss Ujsag. I do not know what the accusation against the person he shot was but what is important is that these brutal methods were permitted and were used. The name of the AVH man, in case you are interested, was Laszlo Zirc.

In connexion with pay I would like to mention that my father was a notary public but I, a simple typist at the AVH, received a much higher salary than he did. The people who were ready to cooperate with the AVH received immense material benefit in addition to gold and silver; they were given furnished apartments, cameras and other appliances.

With regard to the food the prisoners received, three times a day they had a watery soup in which here and there there was a pea, and a small quantity of black bread. At the same time the Nazi war criminals had absolutely nothing done to them. Peter Heim was the only one who was beaten up and he tried to commit suicide, but the rest of them were not at all ill-treated. On the other hand the ordinary people had at the very least a few bones broken. I saw a man who worked in a laundry laid on a table and I know that they put a rubber hose through his intestines. He died as a consequence of this but of course the official report did not admit it.

The searches conducted in houses were also carried out illegally. Somebody would suggest quite at random that in a certain place a suspicious character might be found and the police would write out their own search warrant. I have even participated myself in such a search and during these searches valuable objects were often taken and the searchers even bragged about it when they returned to AVH headquarters.

After a year and a half with the AVH I gave up my job. I had meanwhile been removed from the disciplinary section to another section and I knew that I would eventually be dismissed. I was afraid that I would be arrested because it was obvious from my attitude that I was revolted by what was happening and in addition I had given bread and soap to some of the prisoners. I did not know why they were there. There was, for example, a sixteen-year old girl whom I helped. For a year after I left the AVH I did not work.

I know that these AVH methods did not change later because the people with whom I worked at the time are still there and have the same jobs, and it is not likely that these men would have changed meanwhile. I know that the methods of torture have not changed. My father was imprisoned for thirty-seven months because he was a Social Democrat and I am afraid to speak here of the abominable things that happened to him in case he should suffer for it. When he was taken away we were unable to learn anything about him for six months and during that time my mother contracted a serious heart disease. I then went to 60 Andrassy Street thinking I might find some old colleagues there who would, because of our former relationship, tell me whether he was dead or alive. They treated me most rudely but nevertheless I was very polite. However, when they continued to answer rudely I lost my self-control and banged on the table and shouted that I wanted to know where my father was.

Then they closed the door, locked it and took the key, and a young man came close to me and said "Shout once more". I knew that I should not help my father or mother by doing so, and I tried to behave in a quiet way and get out as quickly as possible. They kept me in that room for an hour and a half; they did not hurt me, but they scared me.

Six months later we received the first news of my father, who was at Kistarcsa. The first time I saw him I did not recognize him. He had lost at least thirty pounds, his teeth were out, and he looked terrible. From that time on I was able to visit him every month behind double bars. There were about sixty prisoners, and sixty visitors at the same time, but everyone was crying and unable to talk. He was subsequently put into other camps; sometimes we knew about them and sometimes we did not. His food was such that he lost thirty kilos (sixty pounds). When my father finally came out he had a nervous breakdown, and we could never ask him what had happened to him, because in spite of the fact that he was a grown man he lived in such fear. I can assure you everyone at home lives in that fear.

It is ten years since I left my work at the police department. I have lived these ten years in intense fear that I might be taken away just because I knew too much, for many such things have happened. If they suspected that anyone might possibly talk, those people were removed. What happened to them afterwards is uncertain, to say the least. In this connexion I should like to say much more; there are many interesting things, and if you feel it is important I could write it down, or I could say it, and I shall be happy to answer questions.

I returned to work at the Hungarian railway rolling-stock factory in 1949. With some difficulty I was finally found employment there, because I was a liability in view of my father's record. I was a stenographer there. They asked me how long I had spent at 60, Andrassy Street, and the chief of the security section told me that if I wanted to remain free I must help them, and get from my colleagues all the information I could. I then again lost my temper and said I had never been an informer, and I never would be one.

I should like to say some more about the events at Csepel. On the 23rd I was on the street at Buda. I will not speak of the demonstration because all that is

well known. In order to show you how much this was a revolution of the workers and the youth I would say that when I arrived at Csepel, as I got to the door of the factory, there was a great crowd of workers. Nobody wanted to go into the factory to work, but they stopped all cars, buses and trucks, and cried out that all Hungarians, all workers, should join us, and we should go to Pest. I lived near a street that connects Budapest with Csepel, and I saw this from the window. This activity lasted all night, and I will quote only one episode to demonstrate the purity of the revolution.

In a house next to us was a rather poor woman who had about 10,000 forints saved, possibly to buy a house. When the fights were going on she had just taken out the money when the top of the house blew off, and she went down to the cellar. She saw young people going all over the place, and as she could not get up from the cellar she felt sure she would never see the money again. When she came back to her apartment, however, she found all the money with a paper-weight on top so that it should not blow away. This had been done by the people who had been through the house.

I was still at home during the demonstrations of 11 January. Next to my workplace was a military arsenal. The Russians naturally occupied that, and it was full of Russians and Russian tanks. When the Russian soldiers had to come out from this arsenal because of the demonstration they did not want to get into the tanks; their officers forced them in, with a revolver in each hand, and that is how these young soldiers of not more than twenty years of age, manned the tanks. This demonstration of 11 January was not of a bloody nature. There were no battles, but the militia shot at the demonstrators; there were some dead, and the people who were crowding the streets were beaten with rubber truncheons.

One could leave Csepel, but one could not return during the day. One could only enter Csepel in the evening when the factory stopped work. I wanted to go home because my child was alone at home, but I could not get there because the AVH and the militia stopped me. I showed them my hand-bag and said "I have not any Molotov cocktails on me, let me go home".

As a further example of how the Russians behaved in Csepel, they shot into a nursing home there. The doctor came out and asked that the shooting should stop because there were sick people lying there. He was shot dead. About the same time in a house next to us the Russians removed everybody and put them into the cellar. The building was used as a store for food supplies, and the Russians looted it; they took what interested them, and then set fire to the house. The people in the cellar were just able to save their lives, when they saw the smoke, by breaking down a part of the wall.

Not far from us in a very simple house there were twenty-six dead. All of the inhabitants of the house were in the cellar, and all of them died. I do not know much about fire-arms, or what kind of guns were used by the Russians.

I know that you are well informed about the ruins that exist in Budapest, where there was terrible destruction. Even in the war, in 1944, there was not such destruction at Csepel and Budapest as there has been now. The Russians indeed conducted a war against us this time.

I should like to mention one more thing: in the days following 4 November my husband met a young girl who had been denounced as having participated in the freedom fight. She was taken to the Csepel police where she was interrogated, not by Hungarians, but by Russians, with the help of interpreters. This twenty-year-old girl was beaten to the point where she felt it for days, but when she related all this to my husband, she asked him not to mention it to anybody, not even to her own mother. It later transpired that she did not participate in the freedom fighting at all, and all the neighbours certified that. Why the Russians interrogated her I would not know, but I only know they seemed to be doing things like that. I forgot to mention another thing too, an episode that occurred at 60, Andrassy Street.

Leading out from the ante-chamber of Gabor Peter there was another room, where it seems likely the Russians directed Gabor Peter and other events. Most of the Hungarians employed there had been schooled in Russia, and had learned their methods. 60, Andrassy Street, also had Yugoslavs as well as Russians; this was before the political break. At the moment nothing else occurs to me.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to thank you very much for your interesting statement. In my opinion it will be of the greatest importance to the work of our Committee in investigating conditions in Hungary. I can assure you your statement has made a deep impression on me, and I think also upon the other members of the Committee. We understand that you have been an intimate eye-witness of all these events.

Now I should like to ask you your experience with the AVH police (which I think you said was in).

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): What I meant to say was that I was there from ... until the end of ... After that I was removed to another post.

The CHAIRMAN: That means, I think, that your experience of the cruelties and atrocities of the AVH was during the time of the coalition government, which means that even during those years of coalition government, the AVH, directed by the Communists, was able to perpetrate such atrocities.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, it was during the coalition government. I come from a Social Democratic family and I was myself a Social Democrat. The Smallholders were also represented there but their number was so small compared with the number of Communists that they, the Social Democrats, and other non-Communists, were generally kept in junior posts. An endeavour was made to put them in other employment than the AVH. It is a long-standing principle of the AVH not to keep people in their employment for too long because in that way they learn too much.

The CHAIRMAN: So far as I know the Minister of the Interior was a Communist during those years?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, that was Laszlo Rajk. He received his just deserts; he eventually received the same treatment as he meted out to others.

The CHAIRMAN: I am not sure if I have understood you correctly and I should like to clarify one point. You said that during those years the Nazis were not ill-treated in the same way as the Democrats, for instance?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): No, this was not what I meant exactly. Their point of view was not concerned with what sort of crime had been committed, and by whom. I meant the war criminals who were returned to Hungary by the American authorities. At that time the AVH built new, better and more modern prisons and it was there that war prisoners were kept. Probably this was done because the AVH feared that released prisoners might give newspaper interviews by which the world would be informed of the methods used by the AVH. They knew that chiefs of state in every country were respected even if they were political or war criminals. I must say that I think those people behaved very courageously. Szalassi had a very clever mind; he did not seem quite normal to me. I typed many papers for him daily. I do not think I received that impression merely because I was only sixteen years old. His thinking was so confused that I do not think anybody knew what he meant.

The CHAIRMAN: The only conclusion I can draw from your evidence is that the secret police behaved in that manner during the coalition government, but it is not clear to me how they behaved afterwards. That is my conclusion and not a question.

I have one more question to ask you. In view of the fact that we shall write a report, in which your testimony will be included, I should like to know if your parents are still living in Hungary because we must take that into consideration.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, please do take that into consideration. My parents are at home and I am continually afraid that harm will come to them, if only because I am now outside Hungary. I should not like anything to happen to them, nor should I like my name to be made public. If my simple knowledge can be of some use to the Committee in preparing its report I should be very glad. Of course, I do realize that I might have judged the work I did when I was sixteen years old differently had I been older at the time.

The CHAIRMAN: You may rely on our discretion.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): Were your duties at the AVH in 1945 and 1946 restricted to those of a stenographer?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I was a shorthand typist in the prison office. Even today I am able to remember many of the people by name who were brought there. I saw everybody who arrived except those who arrived during the night.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): You actually saw yourself the methods which were used by the AVH at that particular time?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, I did. Even if I was not there all the time they often telephoned me to come and take a stenographic record. Only once did I take a record while somebody was being tortured, and I was sick. All those who had to be taken to the hospital came through our office, and those who had received brutal treatment. When I could I spoke to them in a low voice. One of the

staff, whose duties included torturing, is now in Rio de Janeiro; his name is Tamas Goencoel. He was once sent on duty to Soproh and never returned to his office. When he was on duty I was sometimes able to talk to the prisoners; he used to permit it. I have seen people whose ears were practically torn off, whose eyes were streaming and whose heads were bruised and swollen; you could not even tell whether they were old or young. Sometimes they were completely covered with blood. I cannot give you all the details of the horrible tortures I have seen. The father of a friend of mine was arrested and when my friend came to the prison to plead with the AVH not to torture his father, they would not listen to him. Once I went to see him and he was lying on the floor of the cell handcuffed. When he tried to hit back eight AVH men jumped on him and tortured him. Many of his bones were broken and he completely lost control of his natural functions. In order to bring him back to consciousness, they threw water on him and began torturing him again. Afterwards, they discovered that he was innocent. This incident took place in 1946 and ever since then he has been disabled. The AVH had one special torture which was to put pins under peoples' finger-nails. As I said before, some people tried to commit suicide but those who were pushed out of windows were also classed as "suicides".

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I understand that you have a very valid reason, with regard to the case of your own father, for assuming that such incidents have continued since 1945 and 1946. I hope you will forgive me for suggesting this, but there is a conflict in one of the things you have told us. You have said that you assumed that these incidents have continued because you know a number of people who are with the AVH and who were with them ten years ago. However, you have also said that people are not kept for any length of time with the AVH because in that way they would get to know too much. I would like you to explain this slight contradiction in your evidence and why you believe that the same state of affairs has continued to exist. I refer you to the part of your evidence dealing with tortures.

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

The CHAIRMAN: I bid you welcome again and now some of the members of the Committee would like to ask you some questions.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): You come from a village in Trans-Danubia?

WITNESS II (interpretation from Hungarian): I was a soldier in the Trans-Danubian province but I lived in a large town in Trans-Danubia.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): You know Trans-Danubia quite well?

WITNESS II (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): There was no fighting in the Trans-Danubian area?

WITNESS II (interpretation from Hungarian): Where I was, do you mean, or in the Trans-Danubian area generally?

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Where you were, in the first instance.

WITNESS II (interpretation from Hungarian): No, not where I was. There was only one attack, on 4 November, in which three people were killed.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Was there any fighting in the area generally?

WITNESS II (interpretation from Hungarian): No.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Have you any idea of the population of the Trans-Danubian area?

The CHAIRMAN: We all associate ourselves with that hope.

I understand there are no further questions, and so we thank the witness very much for having appeared before the Committee.

Witness JJ withdrew.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I was working at Maria Jaszi Place and the new AVH headquarters were near there. Once when I got off the tram I met people with whom I had formerly worked. What I really meant to say was that the AVH did not keep the same people at the same place for a long time, the so-called political group of the AVH were continually moved to other places. The AVH had many headquarters in Budapest. For example, the person whom I met when I left the tram worked formerly at one place of the AVH and now worked with the political group at Csepel. Another person with whom I worked previously now worked at Ujpest. They continued with their police work in different units. I hope you find this explanation satisfactory.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): Yes, that is satisfactory but it is not the answer to the whole of the question.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): One was always meeting people who had been through the hands of the AVH at one time or another. For example, my father was liberated in 1953 and I learnt from him how the AVH worked at the time. I have spoken to people who were released in 1954 and I have heard the same story from them. Unfortunately, as I said, many people go through the hands of the AVH and sooner or later they do tell their trustworthy friends what happened because no human being can keep this to himself all the time. These people are however very frightened and even within their own families they are very cautious. Still, in spite of that they do discuss these things with people they know very well.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I have one other question to ask and I hope you will understand that I do not really wish to ask it. It is I suppose a function of this Committee to try to evaluate the effect on the Hungarian people of a system of barbarism which goes by the name of Government but I think we should hear, if you can describe what is probably practically indescribable, what else you know of the methods used by the AVH against the Hungarian people.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I am quite ready to do so but rather than speak without preparation I think it would be better if I wrote it down.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I would greatly prefer that if you could write it down.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I shall be very glad to write it down.

The CHAIRMAN: We shall be very grateful to you if you will do that.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): If you tell me where and how to deliver it I will be very glad to write it and if I do this anonymously I think that would be the best way. Perhaps some symbol can be assigned to denote that it was as a result of today's discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, of course. You can rely upon our discretion.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Thank you very much.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Your direct association with the AVH lasted until nearly the end of (.....).

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, that is correct. After that I stayed with the police unit until (.....), as I said previously, but by that time I had nothing more to do with the political police.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): After that you had the unfortunate experience of having to worry about your own father?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes. In connection with that there was another interesting thing. After they took my father away I

(Witness AAA)

wanted to find an old friend of my family at his apartment to see if he could tell me what had happened to my father. He was a very old family friend as at one time he had taken me to work there. He had the position of lieutenant-colonel and I thought he would be able to tell me what had happened to my father. I had not been in touch with him for some time but I obtained his address from a friend and sought him out at his home. I do not remember exactly where it was but it was a villa at Buda. His wife opened the gate but did not allow me in. She was very upset and said it would be better if she did not speak to me and if I left immediately. She said "I have not heard anything about my husband for six months. He spoke against the Party and I think they executed him because of that. I think it is better if you do not speak to me because we shall both be in trouble if you do." I could do nothing else but leave immediately.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Your father was released in 1953?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I think it was on 22 August 1953.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): So your indirect association with the AVH ceased in August 1953.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, but I received reports and information for a time after that through acquaintances.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): After 1953 the information you have is built on hearsay which we as a Committee cannot admit I am afraid.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, I know that only through hearsay.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): You know that in the autumn of 1956 things had improved?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I am not a politician or statesman and therefore I do not know about politics. I cannot talk about this as well as people who are wiser than I am and who have occupied themselves with these things. The way I saw it was that after the death of Stalin the extreme terror would perhaps cease, at least the terror that emanated from Stalin personally, but this continued in Hungary. You could not say that the living standards went up or that food was more plentiful and varied. In my opinion by the summer of 1956 people could not bear it any longer and they started being more courageous and speaking more openly as they seemed to realize that nothing worse could possibly happen to them than had happened so far.

If there had been any improvement we would not have been oppressed by Geroe. When Rakosi left there was no real change. Rakosi was taken away and they just persisted in stabbing each other in the back. They did not look for faults in the system but made certain individuals responsible. A man who the previous day had been their colleague they set aside, murdered him or did anything to get him out of the way. I expect you already know these things. I do not think there was any improvement in 1956.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): We are not concerned with opinions but facts although I attach a great deal of importance to your evidence. After 1953 from your personal experience or knowledge you cannot testify as to what happened.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Since 1953 I did not see anything as an eye-witness. If this line is drawn even what I learnt from my father is hearsay and I might add that I only learnt that with difficulty. Even today I do not know all that happened to him because he has not dared to tell me.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): I believe you know Csepel very well?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I have always lived in Csepel.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): It is an industrial area, is it not?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Csepel offered a tremendous amount of resistance to the Russian tanks, the AVH and everybody else, did it not?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes. I think I can say, quite sincerely, that the greatest resistance was at Csepel.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): It was really a strong centre of the whole revolution?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Can you give me some idea of the number of the population at Csepel?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): About 50,000 I would say.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): How many people do you think have been killed during the revolution in Csepel?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I do not like to say what I do not exactly know.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Can you tell me roughly?

WITNESS AA (interpretation from Hungarian): I know that there were many killed. During the revolution many died in the houses and in the factories but I cannot give you even an estimated number.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): What estimate could you make?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): If I gave you a number completely without basis I think I would be doing more harm than good. I can say that many people were killed, many wounded, there were mass burials -- more than 100 youths were buried at one time -- there were houses where twenty or thirty people died simultaneously, there were many dead from day to day on the streets. No one kept records. I myself went into the streets only when it was absolutely necessary. I know that even people standing in line for bread were fired upon.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): How many would you say that you yourself have seen?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I never looked at the dead, and never counted them. If I knew that someone was dead I avoided the spot because I cannot bear to see dead people or even anyone beaten.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): I know you are an honest witness, and I only wanted your opinion.

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): That is natural, but I think that if I made a baseless estimate I would do more harm than good.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): You are quite right. In practically every home in Csepel everyone was a freedom fighter?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I think the battles occurred mainly in that part of Csepel closer to Budapest. The fighters went from one house to another, and naturally they were in our house as well. One can say that there were freedom fighters in every house.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): I think you told us about a twenty year old girl who was shot?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): Russians beat her.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Do you know the girl yourself?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I know her by sight. My husband has know her since childhood. He spoke to her.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): How do you know this fact?

WITNESS AAA (interpretation from Hungarian): I told you that my husband met her, and she told him about it and even asked him not to tell anybody.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions? There are no further questions and we thank you for your very important statement.

Witness AAA withdrew.

The CHAIRMAN: The intention of the Secretariat was that the next witness should be the first witness on the supplementary list, but the representative of Tunisia has suggested that the evidence of this witness appears to be so important that he ought to be invited to Geneva so that we may have more time in which to question him. I think we can all agree about that.

The next witness will be the second on the supplementary list, a composer and music critic.

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

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Committee I bid you welcome, and we ask you to give your statement on the facts in which we are interested.

WITNESS BBB (interpretation from Hungarian): The first question on which I was asked to give information related to things which happened before the revolution in Hungarian intellectual circles, and especially to writers and composers. I would not go back earlier than two or three months before the revolution, as what happened previously was known through the press.

I would say a few words perhaps about the Petoefi Circle and its operations. Hungarian literature and music were represented by leaders who really restored Marxist teaching to the communist order as they had received it. In the last decade the communist order tried to project its own ideology into intellectual and cultural life and into the people. As to the aesthetic side of this penetration we had to produce realism and to try to picture truth. It may sound a paradox but Hungarian literature and music were ahead of the other arts. This could not be said of painting, for instance. Actually they did depict the truth and caught the voice of the people, and turned almost without exception very sharply against the Communist regime and its sins and terror. About four months before the events of October 1956 the Petoefi Circle began its operations. It was really organized by the Communist Party's youth organization. It was the parallel of the Komsomol with the secret purpose of allowing the Hungarian intellectuals to give voice to dissatisfaction and to give them the chance of expressing, let me say, "legal" opposition. This was the platform of the Petoefi Circle. At its first meeting history professors, economists, philosophers, writers and journalists held separate meetings. The net of organization amongst university students was centred on these meetings. Although the Petoefi Circle was a small group, and the meetings were intended to be meetings within narrow confines, several hundred, and later several thousand students came to these meetings.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): Was the Petoefi Circle composed solely of composers of music?

WITNESS BBB (interpretation from Hungarian): No, it consisted of writers, music composers, journalists, and generally university people. The activities of the Petoefi Circle on the intellectual level were directed to the liberation of Hungarian intellectual values, any such values as had been eliminated by the Communists from Hungarian cultural life before 1956. Gyoergy Lukacs, for instance, the famous aesthete who was well-known in Switzerland and Italy, and whose works about Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel and others are known in Germany, Austria and the rest of the world, was oppressed and repressed for many years by the communist order, he was not even given a university chair, and his students learned aesthetics only through private conversation with him. It should be noted that Gyoergy Lukacs is known with Imre Nagy as a deportee together with the Imre Nagy Government. The rehabilitation of Lukacs happened at one of the meetings of the Petoefi Circle, when the university youth, philosophers, writers and artists in great number met and very enthusiastically, after discussion, took a position in support of Lukacs.

The legal position of the Petoefi Circle is very interesting. Before the revolution it was legally possible to have to a certain extent free discussions which a year or two earlier would have resulted in arrest, imprisonment, or internment camp. In the political situation of the summer of 1956 such freedom was possible but the party did whatever it could to check it.

I was working on a newspaper at that time and at a meeting of the Petoefi Circle which lasted late into the night the censorship which had been imposed was circuited and we hastened to print and publish the paper the following day before the censor could stop it so that thousands of copies could be distributed and read. In consequence of this a whole list of disciplinary proceedings were taken against newspapers and journalists. The climax of the Petoefi Circle's discussions was the meeting held to support freedom of the press at which about 4,000 university students were present. Geza Losonczi, later a minister in the Nagy Government, was there and Tibor Deri the famous writer who is now under arrest. They attacked sharply and mercilessly the Rakosi type of government, which of course brought strong reprisals on the Petoefi Circle and caused it to be disbanded. Even after this the Circle continued to operate right up to the time of the revolution. The first leaflet of the revolution which I have in my possession was published by the Petoefi Circle on 23 October and was distributed among the demonstrators. It contained the demands of the Hungarian people.

I think that is the bare bones of what I can tell you about the history of the Petoefi Circle. It was the first organization for many years to put national unity above the party because it included former Communist Party members and ancien régime writers and every real cultural value was represented.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your description of the character of the Petoefi Circle. Are there any questions?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): You are a composer of music, I think?

WITNESS BBB (interpretation from Hungarian): I was trained as a composer of music and as an organist but during the last six or seven years I have worked as the music critic of a Hungarian daily paper. I have also written a book (...) which will probably be published here in the West. My greatest interest is modern Hungarian music.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): Your work about (...) interests me very much but I would like to ask you to clarify your former statement. In your capacity as a musician and a critic can you tell us something about the rules the Government imposed as to musical composition? Did you feel an absence of individual liberty in artistic creation?

WITNESS BBB (interpretation from Hungarian): I can tell you a good deal about this because only a few days ago I finished a study of this question which will probably be published in the Musical Quarterly. In 1948 the Government started to interfere very widely in questions of musical composition. This was at the time when in Russia the infamous ...

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): But what form did Government interference take?

WITNESS BBB (interpretation from Hungarian): Their interference was organizational, financial and intellectual. The Government set limits beyond which the creative artist, in this case the composer, could not go. This at least was the idea of the Government. Musical compositions were ordered by the Government and a separate Ministry was created for the purpose of organizing literature and art so that the composer was financially dependent for every line he put on paper on the State. There was no question of orders from outside the country or from private individuals. The State, the radio, which was also a State organization, and the various state theatres, through their musical departments, commissioned musical works. After the preparation of these works the so-called musical composition department had to be consulted and this too was organized by the Communist Party. Various Communist leaders were present at these consultations and gave their opinion of the work. They demanded that it should conform in style and content. However, since composers formed a majority in this department the organization did not function as the Communists hoped. It rebelled against these demands and it was in vain that two or three composers tried to represent the State's point of view.

(Witness BBB)

Through their talent and the things they had to say these composers burst through the organizational restrictions and created a serious Hungarian musical literature which included works in favour of revolution and followed in the steps of Bartok and Kodaly in being representative of the twentieth century.

The CHAIRMAN: I apologize for interrupting but I do not think it is necessary to elaborate on this question. All of us know that Stalin himself was the chief of all intellectual life in Russia and in all the Communist countries so we realize that that system was also followed in the so-called people's democracies. I do not think therefore that we need elaborate on this as we have many other witnesses to hear.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): In view of the Chairman's remarks, I will not put any further questions.

Witness BBB withdrew.

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

The CHAIRMAN: I bid you welcome and note that you were a deputy-commander of the freedom fighters of Buda and were among those who seized the equipment and the archives of the AVH and arrested the chief prosecutor of the Rakosi régime. We shall be most interested to hear you speak of these events.

WITNESS CCC (interpretation from Hungarian): The chief prosecutor of the Rakosi régime, Gyula Alapi, lived in Tigris Street. His own chauffeur did not like him and betrayed his address. It was known that he was responsible for the unfavourable decision in the Rajk trial and it was he who accused Rajk of being a traitor, of which he was later found innocent. Gyula Alapi when he was caught had three passports — one in his own name and two in false names with false places and dates of birth. It is probable that with his own passport he wanted to flee

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(Witness CCC)

to Russia. The others bore various visas including Austrian and Swiss. I do not want to take more of your time but would rather you asked me questions.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any questions in connexion with this statement?

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I suppose all the archives and so on were seized again by the AVH having been left in Hungary?

WITNESS CCC (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, I can tell you about that. In the Ministry of the Interior in Jozsef Attila Street we found documents collected through the spy system of the Communist Government. They included records of private telephone conversations which showed that they suspected everyone from diplomats to simple factory workers. They watched everyone if there was the slightest shadow of suspicion so that we found six steel cabinets of tape recordings mostly of telephone conversations carried on with people outside the country. There were diaries in which details of conversations were noted, and statistics of the Rajk and other more political trials recorded. We packed all these and tried to transport them on 5 November to the West but the Russian attack on 4 November prevented this. We wanted to take these to the West to show clearly what was happening in Hungary.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): Did anyone have an opportunity of listening to these tape records? Did they include references to any conversations within foreign embassies or between foreign embassies and the outside?

WITNESS CCC (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, very decidedly.

Unfortunately, since we had no interpreter at our disposal, we could not understand them. We took a few spools in French, German and English of conversations which had been recorded on tapes and were marked with small tags. We did not know what the foreign countries' delegates' speeches were, but apart from this, we found a letter in Hungarian-Turkish in which the Turkish Minister offered to spy for the Hungarian Government, if the accusation against him for spying for the other side were dropped.

The Rajk trial documents were put into crates. The Russians came back too early, however, and we could not get them out.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): What happened to Mr. Alapi? Was he shot or imprisoned, or did he go free?

WITNESS CCC (interpretation from Hungarian): Unfortunately, as I would say now, we did not shoot him. Alapi was taken into our command post, where he asked us to let him make a telephone call to his wife, who would be worried about his absence. We were loyal enough to say to him "Please go ahead and telephone, we are not AVH people." Then we informed him that he would be kept for thirty days' investigation, and after that he would be subjected to a fair trial by a tribunal, and given a proper sentence. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity for that, since the revolution became a fiasco and the Russians came back.

The CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? We thank you for your statement.

WITNESS CCC (interpretation from Hungarian): Thank you very much for hearing me, and I hope what I have said will have helped the cause of the Hungarians.

Witness CCC withdrew.

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

The CHAIRMAN: I bid you welcome on behalf of the Committee. You have worked as a prosecutor in the office of the Chief Prosecutor from March to December 1956; later on you saw many events in that connection that we should like to hear about, so please give us your testimony.

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): In the Chief Prosecutor's office there were about ninety lawyers of whom I was one. I myself took care of living conditions and labour matters but I did have knowledge, in consequence of my operations there, of certain circumstances which prove that the defeat of the Hungarian revolution was completely due to Soviet armed interference.

I should like to testify before the Committee that I know that the Chief Prosecutor, in the days immediately after the revolution broke out, fled in a Soviet armoured car. I heard this from my comrades, but I saw with my own eyes, together with several other people, a Soviet uniform hanging in his office. One of my friends cut off a button from this uniform to keep for future use.

Gyoergy Non was the Chief Prosecutor and at that time, about 25 to 26 October, he wanted to proclaim martial law, in the name of Imre Nagy, who had just declared it. The other prosecutors defeated this intantion, and the order to enforce martial law was not remitted to the lower prosecuting departments.

On 27 October, to the best of my recollection, the lawyers of the Chief Prosecutor's department who considered it illegal to impose martial law, united to demand the resignation and immediate departure of the Chief Prosecutor. This was what happened, and I myself saw Gyoergy Non proceed on foot in the direction of the Soviet-held Parliament. I assume he again sought refuge with the Soviet units there.

There is another thing I should like to tell you about Soviet interference. Our lawyers' revolutionary council in the prosecuting department, even in the first days of December, had taken up a strong position against the Kadar Government. According to the Hungarian penal procedure arrests were supposed to be carried out by the police only with the agreement and co-operation of the prosecutors' department. We learned that, in spite of the Government's decree

(Witness DDD)

giving a complete amnesty to everyone who had taken part in the revolution, with no time limit, strikes continued. In spite of the fact that the right to strike had been recognized, Russian armed units all over the country captured Hungarian civilians and held them in prison.

On 4 and 5 December, together with two members of the Revolutionary Council I was in south Hungary at Inkecskemet and in Szeged. The task entrusted to us by the Revolutionary Council was to get the illegally held Hungarian citizens handed over by the Russian authorities to Hungarian authorities. At the same time, we gave instructions to the provincial prosecutors that illegally held people should be released.

The members of the prosecutors' department continued to try to help people who were captured and imprisoned, and several lawyers were taken away and held prisoner.

At Szeged, too, we carried on negotiations with the Soviet city commander, who at first denied that there were any Hungarian citizens among the people he had captured or who were held by armed Soviet units. When a list of names was put before him by the prosecutors, he said these people were counter-revolutionaries; that there was not a revolution, but a counter-revolution in Hungary, and that the amnesty announced by the Kadar Government did not apply to these people. He also denied that the Workers' Councils had any right to declare a strike, and demanded that the prosecutors should proceed with prosecutions of all the people who were held prisoner.

The negotiations, unfortunately, were fruitless from our point of view. The Russians refused to hand over to the Hungarian authorities the people they were holding. They declared that the liberation of the people was the only thing that interested them, and not the defeat of the counter-revolution. They said we were not acting in the interests of the Kadar Government and representing its prosecuting department; furthermore, our aim was to create trouble, and in their opinion we were ourselves counter-revolutionaries. This view of us, they said, would be transmitted to the Kadar Government and the Russian commander of the town.

Briefly, these are the facts which I experienced myself in connection with Soviet interference, and which I wanted to tell you.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): You were in the service of the Prosecutor's Department before the revolution began?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): You continued until December, 1956?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): Until 6 December 1956.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): That means that you continued in that employment under the Kadar regime?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): We did continue our activities, not in the interest of the Kadar Government, but in the interest of the revolution.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): I suppose during the Kadar regime you were subject to instructions from the Chief Prosecutor's Department?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): The Chief Prosecutor's Department was not under the authority of any ministry but was responsible to the Chief Prosecutor. After 4 November, when the Hungarian revolution was crushed by overwhelming Russians forces, most of the prosecutors in the Chief Prosecutor's Department continued to maintain their position against the Chief Prosecutor: they persisted in their demands and forced him to resign. I would like to say also, that after 4 November we opposed the Kadar Government which nobody recognized. We did not recognize it either but we continued our work temporarily. Grave differences of opinion still existed in the first part of November.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): I know those facts. You are a lawyer, and yet you suggest to me that the Chief Prosecutor is not under instructions from anybody?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): Under the terms of the Constitution, the Chief Prosecutor is responsible only to the National Assembly. In practice he was not responsible to any Ministry.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): The National Assembly at that time was the Parliament of 1953?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): There was no Assembly or legislature in existence at that time. The jurisdiction granted to the Department, under the terms of the Constitution, empowered it to carry on its functions with the approval of an executive committee. However, this committee existed only on paper, and most of its members had fled, or were not even Hungarian citizens.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): The Chief Prosecutor's Department was a law unto itself during all that time?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): When was martial law declared?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): To the best of my recollection about 25 October. It was announced in Nagy's name, but we knew what that meant. At first they referred to him as the one who had called in the Soviet troops; he denied this in a speech he made later.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): Was that declaration of martial law withdrawn by December, when you left?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): It was never repealed but the Revolutionary Council of the Chief Prosecutor's Department was declared to be illegal in the name of Imre Nagy about 27 October. The people of the country were advised of this through the press. Leaflets were prepared containing that information, which I helped to distribute. To the best of my knowledge, since there was strong opposition on the part of the Chief Prosecutor's Department to the enforcement of martial law, until the day I left no proceedings at all were brought under martial law.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): The proclamation of martial law should be made under the signature of the President?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): The declaration of martial law did not appear on public posters but only in newspapers, and the name of Imre Nagy was not publicly posted; there was no signature. At that time, the Chief Prosecutor's Department's lawyers, who were supporting the revolution and the Revolutionary Council of the Department, declared the martial law to be illegal because martial law could only be established by the legislature and notices to that effect had to be posted in public places. The prosecutors could not take up an open position in conflict with the Government, and therefore they used these legalistic excuses to justify their position against the enforcement of martial law.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): What was the legal requirement for the proclamation of martial law under your constitution?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): The legal requirement was that, when the National Assembly was not in session, the Council of Ministers must approve and it must be proclaimed with their consent. No such approval was given by either body.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): The proclamation was published in whose name?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): In the name of Imre Nagy in the newspapers.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): In the name of the Prime Minister, whoever he might be. I just want to know the legal requirements. You were compiling a list of people who had been legally arrested. The Chief Prosecutor's Department obtained information from the provincial departments concerning those people they considered as having been illegally arrested?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): We obtained information concerning some of them only because others had been reported by relatives, who came to see us by the hundred. We had lists of names of those people and demanded of the Russians that they be liberated. At Szombathely even, one of the prosecutors was taken away and we never ascertained what had happened to him.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): Please answer my questions briefly. I want factual information only. Who gave the order for the preparation of the register of names?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): There was no order. Reports and complaints flowed into the Chief Prosecutor's department and we then went to the provinces with the intention of ascertaining whether any Hungarian citizens were being held captive by the Russians. The list came into our possession in Szeged.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): In other words, the prosecutors did this voluntarily?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, voluntarily because complaints were being made in the provincial offices of the Department.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): How many complaints did you receive?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): I think it would be irresponsible on my part to mention any numbers. I know that there were hundreds of complaints arriving all the time at the Chief Prosecutor's Department. I cannot give you a number because it was not my duty to deal with those enquiries.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): So you were unable to ascertain the number. If the Soviets arrested people did they keep them or did they hand them over to the Hungarian provincial authorities?

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WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): In various parts of the country, and at Szeged in respect of which town I myself can testify, the Soviet units themselves arrested and imprisoned the people; the Hungarian authorities were not even allowed to get near the prisoners.

Mr. GUNEWARDENE (Ceylon): Did the Hungarian authorities intervene in any of those cases? If you do not know, just say so.

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, they intervened in several cases. The result was that at Szeged, where I myself had gone, two lawyers of the Chief Prosecutor's Department themselves became captives of the Soviet units because they succeeded in achieving the liberation of several Hungarian citizens.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): Could the witness tell us something about Hungarian law. In Hungarian law could someone be arrested without the approval of the Chief Prosecutor's Department?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): No, under Hungarian law the police take a person into custody, but only for twenty-four hours.

(Witness DDD)

If this period is lengthened by another twenty-four hours, or even longer, then the public prosecutor must be brought in. That period can only last one month and after that he must be put on trial before judges if he is to serve a further term of imprisonment.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): Under Hungarian law have you a system which permits the authorities to arrest or put into a camp an innocent person without bringing him before a tribunal and only on the strength of an administrative decision?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): I think until 1953 this was so. On the basis of an order by the Ministry of the Interior in 1939 I believe that some people were authorized to move people from one place to another. From 1953 onwards this practice and this law ceased.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): Was there another law or an administrative order introduced which annulled the law you mentioned?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): No, no special law was published to annul that practice but I think the Committee knows that in the summer of 1953, when Imre Nagy was Prime Minister, in a speech he gave a report of these serious and grave infringements of basic human rights and it was in 1953 when the internment camps were disbanded.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): Who appoints the Chief Prosecutor?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): According to the constitution the Chief Prosecutor is elected by the National Assembly.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): Is there provision for martial law under your constitution or the declaration of a state of emergency?

WITNESS DDD (interpretation from Hungarian): I admit that according to my knowledge the constitution does not include any such possibility.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Witness DDD withdrew

The CHAIRMAN: I feel I have to remind the members of the Committee that we still have half-a-dozen witnesses left whom we ought to hear and it is nearly six o'clock. We cannot continue our proceedings for too long because it is necessary for the verbatim reporters and for other members of the staff to work rather long hours after our meeting has been concluded so I appeal to members of the Committee to refrain from asking questions if they are not felt to be very imperative.

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

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Committee I bid you welcome. I understand that you are a retired major and you have something to tell us about the developments and the actions of workers and peasants in Hungary from 1947 to the end of 1956. I must admit that time will not allow you to tell us the whole story of those ten years but only what is relevant to the work of our Committee -- the last few years.

WITNESS EEE (interpretation from Hungarian): I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you and I will explain very briefly, from 1947 to the middle of December 1956, the pre-revolutionary behaviour of the Hungarian peasants and the iron workers of Csepel.

The position of the large landholders, the small landholders and the farmers under the Communist regime in Hungary since 1947 can be briefly described in the following terms. In some places, in fact one could often say on a national level, they were opposed to it.

On 15 March 1945, when Imre Nagy was Minister of Agriculture in the Government, the land reform movement was started and the distribution of two or three parcels of land in the district of Debrecen commenced. This was carried on for many years and the large estates were divided and distributed among the collectives. During this time the farmers' organizations were created at various levels.

(Witness EEE)

From the start great opposition expressed itself in various parts of the country to joining these collectives, because the leaders of the collectives everywhere were completely Communist. They were people with communist ideologies and theories who in many cases were political leaders of the villages and towns, and later, when there was an order in 1948 or 1949 for relieving these leaders of the collectives, members of the Budapest City Party secretariat, army officers, and even dismissed officers and retired officers of the AVH were put into these positions.

Great opposition was evident in various parts of the country among all the peasantry. There was opposition against joining these collectives and against collective farming because their animals, their implements, their produce and everything they owned had to be given to the collectives.

The CHAIRMAN: I am very sorry but we have had testimony from a farmer today who has informed us of the views of the peasantry and the population generally on this problem, so I ask you not to go into details about this matter but to tell us what you know about the exact events during the revolution with regard to the Russian intervention.

WITNESS EEE (interpretation from Hungarian): I would like to apologize. Before I came in I was asked not to speak of the revolutionary events but of things that had happened before that. I was asked to talk to the Committee about the feeling against the Communist regime.

The CHAIRMAN: I regret very much if you have been advised to talk about that. How much time will your statement take?

WITNESS EEE (interpretation from Hungarian): A very short time -- it will last only two minutes.

The CHAIRMAN: Will you please continue?

WITNESS EEE (interpretation from Hungarian): During eleven years the peasantry developed a very wholehearted opposition to this system of delivering all animals, implements and produce to the collectives. At the end of October 1956 this system was abolished by the Imre Nagy Government. After that there was no compulsory delivery of property by the peasants or individual farmers, or even by the peasants who chose to join the collectives.

I have now finished with this matter and will speak about the workers of Csepel. I do not want to speak about the conduct of the peasants during the revolution because that is such a broad subject and there is no time for that here.

The CHAIRMAN: We have had a statement about that; so you may be reassured.

WITNESS EEE (interpretation from Hungarian): There were many Hungarian workers living close to the Csepel iron and steel works and the most skilled technical workers throughout Hungary were sent to work at Csepel.

Their opposition there was so much greater because for twelve years strikes and sabotage had been prohibited and had they given vent to their feelings by these means they would have been arrested and exposed to very grave punishment, especially the younger workers. On 22 October, university students and high school students started their demonstrations at Szeged and at Budapest. At the big demonstrations in the morning and afternoon of 26 October several thousand workers joined them.

I do not wish to say anything in greater detail about the conduct of the workers, because after 23 October armed conflict occurred.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank you for your statement, which has confirmed other information received by the Committee. If no further questions are asked it will be, you will understand, not because the Committee is lacking in interest but because we have already heard other witnesses on the same points. There are no questions, and we thank you.

Witness EEE withdrew.

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

The CHAIRMAN: I bid you welcome on behalf of the Committee. I understand that you were secretary of the Workers' Council in Csepel.

WITNESS FFF (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Will you please give us briefly your statement about the events of which you were an eye-witness or in which you yourself participated?

WITNESS FFF (interpretation from Hungarian): I believe the Committee are aware of the events which occurred immediately after 23 October, and I would therefore like to confine myself to those which took place at Csepel. The Csepel Workers' Council was created on 30 October, and on the basis of their knowledge of me during twelve years I was elected secretary. I do not know whether I should be helping the Hungarian cause by telling you of the events which led ultimately to the creation of the Workers' Council and its operations. May I ask whether you are interested in how the Csepel Workers' Council was elected?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, we certainly are. We have had evidence about other Workers' Councils, but we would be interested to hear as briefly as possible about the main lines on which the Csepel Workers' Council was elected.

WITNESS FFF (interpretation from Hungarian): On the first day after the revolution fifty per cent of the workers appeared at work and the union immediately decided upon the election of a new Workers' Council. As 35,000 workers were employed at Csepel the individual workers' Councils were elected according to plants. As the work-people in the different plants knew each other, they formed groups and each group compiled a list of people whom they thought were qualified to represent them in the Workers' Councils. It was prescribed that twenty people would be elected to the Workers' Council, perhaps even thirty people were nominated, and the voters deleted the names of those they did not favour. This could also be done in writing. The twenty people who received the most votes were elected. The Workers' Councils of the plant then nominated -- according to the number of workers they represented -- delegates to the Central Workers' Council. Thus was formed the Central Workers' Council of Csepel, which consisted of fifty-nine members and of which I myself was a member, and which elected a praesidium of twelve. The first chairman was Bella Illes, there were ten other members, and I became secretary. These elections were carried out in a thoroughly democratic way according to the wishes of the workers. Thereafter the Workers' Council dealt with the different problems affecting the workers because they saw that the freedom which came with the revolution was not secure. Certain demands were therefore made to the Nagy Government because Soviet troops were still in the country and there was not enough security to ensure a free life. A few days went by, we saw that Imre Nagy was ready to give certain guarantees, and we therefore were prepared to resume work on 2 November. The 3rd was a Saturday, and we planned to go back to work on Monday the 5th. Unfortunately, Sunday the 4th intervened and therefore we could not prove our readiness to resume work on the 5th.

When the attack started on the 4th I myself went to the National Council of Csepel and with the commander discussed what to do -- "There are only a few of us. What can we do?" With the leader of the National Council, Istvan Ivanics, and several military commanders we decided that we would declare neutrality, that we

would not shoot. "Let us have no more bloodshed because it now seems useless." We tried to carry out this policy, but the workers did not listen to us; they felt that aid might come from outside and the Russians be stopped, and therefore they decided to fight with arms even if it meant sacrificing their lives. We were unable to control the youth and the workers. A few armed people stayed at Csepel but the majority went to help Budapest. Those who stayed at Csepel were helped by the army and tried to defend Csepel with six or seven cannons. As Csepel is an island they were able to organize a defence, and when Budapest fell the Soviet troops were able to occupy Csepel only by destroying completely the northern part of Budapest. In every cellar twenty-five dead people could be found. The area being a workers' quarter the buildings were not very strong and so the number of dead there was very great. When Budapest fell after three days of attack, Csepel was occupied and those of the people who had arms threw them away and tried to escape, disguising themselves if necessary. In accordance with the spirit of the revolution, the Workers' Council of Csepel continued to work for its aims and presented to the Kadar Government the same demands as had been made to Imre Nagy. Kadar met our demands by re-establishing the Council with its former functions and gave it the opportunity of directing the factory.

These demands however were only agreed to on paper because the Workers' Council was faced with certain problems of a very difficult nature which had to be dealt with day after day. For instance, there were in the factory old party officials who were the puppets of the Rakosi régime and tried to direct the economic and industrial life of the factory in the old spirit. They wanted to bring back the directors who had no technical training and we of course had to raise our voices against this, particularly since they also tried to discredit the Workers' Council. Our director expressed his opinion on this quite clearly and shortly after the end of the revolution tried to order us to re-establish the Soviet war memorial of Csepel. At the same time they were holding daily meetings with the Russians who often came to the meetings of the Workers' Council. The first time they appeared we protested but they said they wanted to participate in the meeting only because they did not know how the Council functioned since they did not have such councils themselves and wanted to know about them. To this we answered that we had no secrets and would say in front of the Soviet commanders whatever we would say behind their backs. We had to submit to this because we were told the Workers' Councils could meet only with Soviet permission as the organization of meetings was forbidden.

The most important thing to the Russians was that we did not resume work. They asked us why we as a Workers' Council were opposing the return of the people to work. There were several occasions too on which they did not come to us, the Workers' Council, but asked us to appear at their headquarters. Thus the chairman, Bala Illes, and myself were asked to go to Soviet headquarters where they announced unilaterally that the workers would have to resume work and that those who would not do so would be isolated -- that is the word they used.

There was frequent disagreement between the Government, the Russians and the Workers' Council. They did not understand what we really wanted and they emphasized every day that we were Fascists, or at least that there were many Fascists among us who were preventing the resumption of work. They said they had spoken to the workers who had told them that they wanted to work, but naturally the workers with whom the Russians had spoken were the old party officials. We became convinced of that when there was a question of changing the directors of

the factory. We asked for an audience with Minister Csergoe and the old Communist leader and party functionaries were all present at that meeting. The Minister asked how we could ask for the removal of the directors when they were well loved. He said he had just received a delegation which had asked that the directors should remain in their positions. I replied that we knew this delegation to be composed of old party members.

Our first protest, after trying very hard to get to Kadar, was presented only to Minister Apro. Kadar said he was too busy to receive us, so the secretariat told us. Our first demand was the withdrawal of Russian troops and Apro said: "The withdrawal of Russian troops from Hungary would mean the fall of the Hungarian workers' régime." We then demanded that Nagy be reinstated as head of the Government, to which Apro answered that they had tried to negotiate with Imre Nagy and had invited him to join the Government but he was reluctant to do so, and it was up to him to decide whether or not he wanted to participate in the Government.

Our further demands are well known, namely, the freeing of Maleter and the other freedom fighters, freedom of the press and freedom to organize meetings. The answer to this was that these freedoms had always existed and would always exist.

Our negotiations were therefore fruitless and afterwards we were unable to get into the Ministry, and the Workers' Council of Csepel were continually called Fascists.

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Finally, on 27 December, Kadar received us and we had a very poor opinion of what happened. Our first demand was that the workers of Csepel should have a press organ through which we could keep the workers informed to prevent the spreading of false information. Kadar answered: "Do you think we can give a press organ to everybody?" Then he went on, and here I quote him verbatim, "We will not allow you to have your own newspaper because we know what the leading article would be about -- the heroic, glorious October revolution. That is why we do not want you to have a newspaper."

The next important event about which I should like to speak occurred on 8 January when we decided that in view of the threatening attitude of the Russian troops and of the militia we could not carry on successfully the task entrusted to us by the workers and would therefore resign. At the same time delegations arrived from the Workers' Councils of other factories as the Workers' Council of Greater Budapest had

been dissolved and everybody wanted to follow Csepel. That day the delegates of about eight or ten factories came to see us but by then the factory was guarded by Soviet troops and militia who were informed of the arrival of these delegations. The delegations bore passes stating that they were dealing with wage questions. The Russian troops and the militia informed police headquarters, however, that a meeting of the Greater Budapest Workers' Council was being held. The delegates from the several factories were unanimously of the opinion that they could no longer deal with the strong Soviet interference and with that of the militia and therefore wanted to dissolve the Workers' Councils everywhere. In this way they hoped to keep the confidence of the workers. This meeting lasted only one or two minutes and we were in complete agreement. Suddenly the police chief, Karoly Sos, arrived from police headquarters. There were only members of our Workers' Council present and he came in with great violence and said it was a meeting of the Greater Budapest Workers' Council and was illegal. We of course denied that and said we were just discussing the agenda for the next day. He then said that he knew the Greater Budapest Workers' Council was meeting there and it was illegal and he must take appropriate measures. As we denied this, he said he would stay at the meeting. We objected and said that since we were being accused we demanded that he should examine our identification papers, when he would realize there were only workers present. He refused to do this and finally departed. We thanked him for coming.

That is how we decided to dissolve the Workers' Councils. We drafted a resolution in which we resigned but we did not dare to reproduce this officially. It was just written down by each of us and it was only at home that this paper was duplicated and distributed. This happened on the 8th and two days later the effect of it was seen as the workers were not willing to elect a new Workers' Council and did not want to work with any other council. A demonstration was therefore organized for 11 January in the factory grounds and the workers from other factories joined in this.

The purpose of the demonstration was to protest against the removal of certain workers from the factory and against the atrocities of the militia and the Russians. About 5,000 people were gathered, and in the meantime the Soviet armoured units were alerted and armoured cars came to the territory of Csepel. They were unable to enter the factory because the entrances were barred by all kinds of machinery and factory equipment. Nevertheless the public authorities tried to come in and partially succeeded. In the meantime, the demonstrating crowd went to the central building of the factory where the directors were. There the workers chose twelve people whose duty it would be to enter the central building and bring out two directors in order to remove them from the factory, because they had been the cause of what had happened in Csepel in the last few months.

The twelve delegates were prevented from entering the factory, and when they tried to force their way in, the corridors of the central building were by that time full of militia who used their weapons and killed a man and wounded several others. Later on reinforcements arrived; Soviet armed guards placed themselves outside the factory with their machine guns and from inside, the militia tried to disperse the crowd with their weapons. Subsequently, the workers were able to take away some of the weapons from the militia; they did not use them, but broke them. Nevertheless, because of the pressure and the shots fired in the air, the workers became scared and some of them scattered. The rest, seeing there was no unity, thought the best thing would be for them to leave too. Work stopped for the whole day and the former leaders asked that everybody should leave the factory.

During the night the praesidium of the Workers' Council was on the point of being arrested. I did not sleep at home. At two o'clock in the morning the militia came and surrounded the house. I myself, however, not being at home, was not arrested and I learned of it only the next day. On 13 January I escaped to Austria.

These are the general events about which I can speak. If I had known, I would have prepared some notes to help me to remember what happened in Csepel.

The CHAIRMAN: We thank you very much. I am of the opinion that in spite of your unpreparedness it has been an excellent statement of the situation and events in the important island of Csepel.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): I appreciate that Csepel was a vital force in the revolution, and I would like to know whether you, as an official of the Workers' Council, can estimate the number of workers killed in Csepel?

WITNESS FFF (interpretation from Hungarian): Counting civilians, there were 250 or 300 dead.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): You also stated in your evidence that although you knew it was useless to carry on, the workers expected aid from outside Hungary. What kind of aid did the workers expect from outside?

WITNESS FFF (interpretation from Hungarian): In the first instance, as we saw that the fight was hopeless, as no effective opposition could be given to all the armoured force about which we had heard over the radio, we were unable to fight these forces with guns and Molotov cocktails. Using the words of Imre Nagy we tried to impart his idea to the public -- that we would be neutral, we would not shoot. The public, however, being ill-informed, might have thought that troops sent by the United Nations would come to Hungary, as the Nagy Government was the lawful government of the people and they wanted to maintain it, even though Nagy was not elected by secret ballot. The people felt the Soviets were trying to overthrow the legal government and everybody counted on some kind of foreign help coming. If this did not happen, a quick decision and a resolution of the United Nations would force the Russians to withdraw. This was what one could hear being said amongst the workers.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions? Then we thank you very much for your statement and your explanations.

Witness FFF withdrew.

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

The CHAIRMAN: I bid you welcome on behalf of the Committee. I understand you are acquainted with a man by the name of Miklos Beres who was deported to the Soviet Union, and that you can testify to that. I now ask you to give us your statement.

WITNESS GGG (interpretation from Hungarian): Around 10 January, Miklos Beres went to see Kardoly Muzsnyak —

The CHAIRMAN: Who was Miklos Beres?

WITNESS GGG (interpretation from Hungarian): An official. He went to see Karoly Muzsnyak and informed him that his brother-in-law, whose first name was Bela, was with him in the camp at Mukacevo, and that at the end of December he went to Debrecen and was still there at the camp. According to his description this was a camp composed of barracks where the members of the AVH were interrogating them. He did not mention anything about whether he was tortured or not.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you tell us anything about the deportation of the man in question?

WITNESS GGG (interpretation from Hungarian): I cannot give you any more concrete information than this.

The CHAIRMAN: Then I think we can do nothing else but thank you for appearing here.

Witness GGG withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman Gyoergy Sebestyen took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you will introduce yourself and give us your statement.

Mr. SEBESTYEN (interpretation from Hungarian): My name is Gyoergy Sebestyen. I was the editor of the literary section of the newspaper called Magyar Nemzet. I am a newspaper man.

The CHAIRMAN: I suppose you wish to be anonymous in our verbatim records?

Mr. SEBESTYEN (interpretation from Hungarian): Even though I have a family in Hungary, I do not find it necessary to be anonymous.

The CHAIRMAN: Please will you continue.

Mr. SEBESTYEN (interpretation from Hungarian): The problem I should like to talk about deals with those persons who are now, together with Nagy, under arrest. These are either political or personal friends, and I think it is important that I should say something about their role. I prepared a list, which is a part of the list given by the Yugoslav Legation in Budapest. I should like to give you a few facts about the names on that list. Goergy Fazekas was at the Yugoslav Legation, in Imre Nagy's group, and he is a newspaper man who at the time of the revolution was active in the organization of the police. During the revolution his activities included the organization of the protection of the newspapers against the attacks of the AVH.

(Mr. Sebestyen)

Ferenc Janosi, who was the Director of the Literary Museum in Budapest, and a protestant minister, is also now with Imre Nagy, who is his father-in-law. He organized the celebrations held in honour of the birthday of Imre Nagy. On Nagy's birthday in 1955, about seventy people visited him; among them were the leading newspaper personalities, literary personalities, and others.

Another important member of the Nagy Party was Geza Losonczi, an unlawful communist, who, after 1945, became the Deputy Minister of Education. He was later imprisoned and after his release he became a collaborator on the newspaper Magyar Nemzet.

Nowadays supporters of the Kadar Government talk a great deal about the role played by Losonczi in the preparation of the revolution. At this point I should like to relate a personal experience. In the evening of 23 October, when the revolution had just begun, I was in a coffee house with Losonczi. Miklos Vasarhelyi, who is now in prison with Imre Nagy, was also with us, and we all had a political discussion. Kadar supporters now maintain that Losonczi was an anti-revolutionary and at an arsenal at that moment: actually he was having coffee with me. Losonczi held the position of Minister of State in Nagy's cabinet. It was he who held the last meeting on 3 November in Budapest.

I should like to call your attention to the fact that he is now a very sick man, having contracted a lung disease while in prison.

Among other personal friends of mine who are at present with Imre Nagy, is the widow of Laszlo Rajk, of whom you have heard. May I point out that in July 1956, at the meeting of the anti-Fascist fighters, she was the first one to make an attack on the Rakosi faction.

Szilard Ukhelyi, a director of the State Film Board, was also in prison with Imre Nagy. In July, and at the beginning of August 1956, he was engaged on Polish-Hungarian cultural relations.

I have already mentioned Miklos Vasarhelyi who, for a long time, was chief of the press section of the Hungarian Government, and who, by reason of his anti-Stalinist conduct, was dismissed from all his posts and was in a very difficult situation for some time. When the revolution broke out he assumed responsibility for press matters, was arrested, and is now imprisoned with Nagy.

(Mr. Sebestyen)

Others who did not belong to the close circle around Imre Nagy, but are imprisoned with him, include Gyorgy Lukacs, a university professor, Zoltan Szanto, former Hungarian minister in Warsaw, and Zoltan Vas, a former minister. All these people are known to me personally and I would be very glad to give you information concerning their political activities at that time.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We are very grateful to you for having mentioned those personalities who, in your opinion, are with Imre Nagy in prison.

Mr. Goergy Sebestyen withdrew.

The CHAIRMAN: We have heard nineteen witnesses today and our proceedings in Vienna are now concluded.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.