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ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE PROBLEM OF HUNGARY

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIFTY-SECOND MEETING (CLOSED)

Held at 10 Carlton House Terrace, London,  
on Monday, 1 April 1957, at 3.15 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. Alsing ANDERSEN

(Denmark)

*Pal-Horvath. Rev. Based on Communists - Anti Soviet not anti Rus  
Counter. theory for Chinese Consumption  
Kadar, schizoid. - But Munnich the leader  
Kadar willing to conciliate up to 17 Nov  
MMM No fighting in Tisza area  
Data of policies of Small-H party*



The CHAIRMAN: This is the last meeting of the Committee here in London. In addition to the witness, Mr. Paloczi-Horvath, we only have one other witness to hear and to question today.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Paloczi-Horvath took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Committee I bid you welcome and we are going to ask you questions. Perhaps I might be permitted to begin with one question. I listened with very great interest to your statement and to many of the details of your statement and, for instance, the point where you mentioned Sirov. As far as I remember you mentioned him as the chief of the Soviet secret police and I believe he was the man who was not welcomed together with Khrushchev and Bulganin when they visited Great Britain. Therefore, he is a very important person and it seems to me that he is a very important detail for the Committee to take into account. I will just ask you if, according to your information, you are quite sure that it was Sirov himself who was present and who arrested the Hungarian negotiators?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): Yes, I am personally quite sure about it. As I mentioned to you I got a personal message about it. Unfortunately, I am not permitted to give all the details in an open meeting but if you care for it I am perfectly willing to give my source of information which I think is an added proof of its authenticity.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. That is the only question I wanted to ask you.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): We are I think, generally, satisfied that the revolution was not a planned revolution, that it took many people in Budapest by surprise but I would like to have your view on the way in which the revolution manifested itself after it started. By that I mean did it immediately, or later,



(Mr. Shann)

shows signs of an anti-Communist nature or an anti-Russian nature, or was it merely the desire of people to be allowed to go their own way towards whatever goal they decided upon themselves? I would like you to be quite clear if you can as to the stages at which the revolution became anti-Communist or anti-Russian and whether there was any distinction between the attitude of the people taking part in the revolution in Budapest towards Communism and towards the Russians and perhaps in the provinces towards Communism and towards the Russians.

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): The Committee know perfectly well that those persons and those elements who prepared the way for such a magnetic field, so to speak, in which an eruption took place were mostly legally Communist Party members. Most of the Petoefi Circle members -- the writers, who are now in prison -- were members of the Communist Party, and in the fighting, both in Budapest and in the country, a great percentage of the people were legally Communist Party members. When it started it had an anti-Stalinite character but those people taking part in it were I think evenly divided between those Communist Party members who were already consciously anti-Communist and those Party members who became anti-Communist during the revolution. The workers belonged to the first category and as you know the industrial workers of Csepel gave a manifestation of this when at Stalin's statue they threw their Party cards -- that was on the first evening. They were Communist Party members who were already consciously anti-Communist.

Among the intellectuals -- the writers and university students -- the development was slower. It took Soviet behaviour during the four or five days of the revolution to transform those people although anti-Communist who started out by believing that they could build up Communism without total terrorism.

My answer would be that the revolution, until the first Soviet intervention, on the whole had a decidedly anti-Communist character although the leading elements in it were most of them legally still members of the Party.

We did research during the revolution and afterwards about the wounded and dead of the revolution. Unfortunately, we succeeded in gathering information only about the Pest side but in some districts some sixty per cent of the wounded were



(Mr. Paloczi-Horvath)

Communist Party members. On the other side of the city in Buda it was less. I would say that by the sixth day of the revolution it was already a decidedly anti-Communist revolution. As it has been printed you know it very well that Gyula Hay, one of the oldest Communist writers, declared himself anti-Communist on the sixth day.

Does that answer the question?

Mr. SHANN (Australia): Yes, it does up to a point but is there any distinction in your mind, and was there any distinction in the minds of the people who were fighting, between an anti-Communist attitude -- that is an attitude against the kind of Government that they had been subjected to themselves by Hungarians -- and an anti-Russian attitude? Is there any distinction between anti-Communist and anti-Russian behaviour?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): I think so, yes. Most of the anti-Communist politically grown-up people at least believed it to be true that the Russian people themselves are just as anti-Communist as they are. I do not know whether it is true or not but people in Hungary believe that in Russia there are nearly thirty million people in concentration camps, forced labour camps and prisons. I do not know whether that is true or not but most of us believe that to be true. Consequently, people took great care to be anti-Soviet, anti-Kremlin and not anti-Russian. Of course, during the fight many nationalistic elements came out but the main line in the revolution was, I think, anti-Communist, anti-Soviet and not anti-Russian.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): You have taken care to refer to the Communists who participated in the revolution as legally Communists, do you mean to imply by this that they were members of the Communist Party, what the Americans call "card-carrying Communists"? They were members of the Communist Party not because they really wished to become members of the Communist Party but because in the circumstances of Hungary it was the only way to make a decent living or the only way to look after their families?



Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): Yes. I think it was about half and half. After the Hitlerite occupation of Hungary many people joined the Communist Party believing their programme which they announced in 1945 to be sincere and honest and most of them were disillusioned between 1946 and 1949. By the end of 1949 very few people were card-carrying Communists or were really Communists. The others -- I think more than half -- must have been people who were forced by circumstances and for their very existence to join the party and they did not dare to leave it.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): There is quite a lot of evidence before us that the Communist Party as such disintegrated and that there were so few Communists left when people were permitted or thought they were permitted to make up their own minds as to which party they would like to belong to that perhaps there was not more than one or two per cent of the population who were really Communists.

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): Yes, we do believe that is so. If I may tell you of a personal experience; as the managing-editor of our literary gazette was on the Buda side during the fighting and we had to produce our weekly paper I edited it. By that I mean I went around under fighting conditions collecting manuscripts and brought them to the printers. While I was putting the paper together in great haste someone called me up, a very big name in the international Communist movement before the Second World War but who since 1945 had not taken a great part in affairs. However, I looked on him as one of the remaining dinosaurs of blind, idealistic Communism and he spoke to me on the telephone. Apparently he had been looking for me everywhere and he said "Your paper can do a lot in working for national unity. Do not make the mistake of praising the Communist fighters in the revolution. Communism is a lost cause, a dishonest cause. The name is out and you should not mention it."



(Mr. Paloczi-Horvath)

As a matter of fact, I was not going to mention it, but it was a shattering experience coming from a man I miss so much. Out of the family of five — father, mother and brother — only one died a natural death, the others being executed. He said that to me in those circumstances.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I take it that the rejection of Communism, the name Communism, the ideas of Communism, does not mean the rejection of Socialism.

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): Not necessarily; but, if I may say so, we discussed matters with former Communists, and this is what happened during what they called their enlightening period. They retreated from Stalin to Lenin, then they remembered certain things that Lenin wrote and said and then they retreated to Marx and Engels, and then from Marx and Engels they retreated to commonsense and common humanity because they saw that in the principle of the dictatorship of the Proletariat lies the root of the matter, and that in the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat is contained everything that Khrushchev denounced about Stalin in his secret speech. So they arrived at the position of turning against Marxism as such, and I am sincerely convinced that most of the people in the Soviet Union and the satellites, who were sincere Communists, went through that process — in the satellites between 1947 and 1949 and in the Soviet Union, as is well known, between 1936 and 1941.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): If we continue along this line of questioning we shall probably end in some kind of philosophical debate. You handed to the Committee on Saturday morning a resolution of, I think, 28 December. We have already seen this document. Was that resolution signed by the people who prepared it? I think not. Was it known to the Government who prepared it, and if so what happened to the people who prepared it? Is it in fact a public document, and could any harm come to anyone if the Committee were to use that document, which I personally regard as of considerable importance coming, as it did, so long after the revolution had been crushed?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): The resolution was drafted on 2 December by a Committee in the Writers' Union in which the leadership took part.



(Mr. Palocz-Horvath)

I do not know exactly who were in at that time. At the open congress of the Writers' Union — I think it is contained in the document — there were 250 voices against, I think, eight abstentions. It was a public session. There were present journalists and representatives of Kadar's Communist Party, it was discussed and attacked in the newspapers, the text was published in Hungarian to the number of many thousand copies. It was printed by us on 15 March. It is not a secret document and its existence has not been denied. The Kadar Government has never denied that resolution. It has been attacked in leading articles in the Party daily publication which has quoted various parts of the resolution.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): On Saturday I think you added to the evidence which would lead the Committee to regard as nonsense the allegations by the Soviet Union and the present Hungarian Government that what happened on 23 October was a counter-revolution. I personally regard those allegations as nonsense, and I think probably most if not all of my colleagues on the Committee are also of the same opinion. Have you yourself any theory — I have several theories — as to why the Hungarian Government and the Soviet Government have concentrated so much on the idea that what happened in Hungary was a counter-revolution?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): Our theory was that those allegations were put forward having in mind the satellites, China, and even the Yugoslav Government. I think that is the main reason. I do not think it has anything to do with the Hungarian people because both Kadar and company and the Kremlin leaders know very well that in Hungary not even a child would believe those allegations, and so I think it must be that it was for Soviet consumption at home and for the other satellites that those allegations were made.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): You have not thought of the possibility that the allegation of a counter-revolution was prompted for legal reasons connected with international law about the Soviet intervention in Hungary? Under the Peace Treaties the Allied Powers are, I think, permitted to see to it that counter-revolutionary Fascist and Nazi organizations do not re-establish themselves in Hungary. You have not considered that aspect?



Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): No.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): In my view that is the only conceivable legal justification for Soviet intervention in Hungary.

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English) Yes. I have not thought of it. It sounds plausible, but all the documentary evidence shows that it is not based on facts. I know that.

Mr. SHANN (Australia); I would like a personal view. It is probably not something on which you are an expert but you may have some views about it. How important do you think the uranium mines of Hungary are regarded by the Soviet Union?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): I was in the Petoefi Circle when Professor Janosi, who was professor of nuclear physics in Dublin, told us that he, the head of the Hungarian Nuclear Commission, or whatever is its proper name, was not informed of any details of the uranium mines in south-western Hungary, or of the amount of secrecy which surrounded the whole question of uranium mines in Hungary, the fact that in the uranium and thorium district even the neighbouring highways and the specially built railway were guarded by Soviet troops. I thought that uranium played a very great part in the events in Hungary. During the morning of 30 October the Soviet Government made the declaration that it would withdraw troops from Budapest. I believe they did that only because their situation then was very precarious, their tanks did not succeed in Budapest or in Hungary, there was unrest in the other satellites, and they feared a flare-up; hence they promised something which they had no intention of carrying out — I am going to write that in a book and so I believe it — and they did not mean to keep their promise because of our uranium.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): Two hundred thousand Hungarians have left Hungary. Some have no doubt left because of the regime, many have no doubt left from fear of being identified from pictures taken by Western photographers when removing posters



or overturning the Stalin statue, or for some reason of that sort. It would seem to me to be reasonable to assume, however, that the departure of nearly 200,000 people could not be attributed to those reasons, merely wanting to leave the country for fear of being identified. Have you yourself any view as to what prompted many other people to leave the country? Is there any possibility, for instance, as we have been told by others, that some people left the country merely for the adventure or fun of it or for some such reason? What would be your view as to the general reasons for people having left Hungary?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): I think that only about fifteen per cent to twenty per cent had good reasons for leaving. The 5,000 university students were obliged to leave, even more should have left, and all those who fought. Then, as you know very well, at the beginning the frontier villages became almost empty of people who went through. There was a general sort of hysteria to leave. I met a young boy who left because he feared Latin in his last examination. People had all sorts of reasons. Nevertheless, I think it would still be true to say that most left because of the regime, directly or indirectly. People hardly leave home and abandon all their belongings unless they fear a very dismal and dangerous existence by remaining. I still would say that probably only about twenty per cent had urgent reasons for leaving.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I suppose that people did not have much time in which to think about what was happening; but is it not a fact that the departure of 200,000 young and intelligent people out of a population as small as that of Hungary must have a devastating effect on the future of the country?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): - Yes, I think so. And that kind of thing has been going on since 1945. The Soviet Union tried for many years to keep the best elements in the Union. Some of them spent ten years there. You know the Kadar policy, the fact that classless descent was taken into consideration; children of six years of age were put into six different categories, three of the lowest categories having no chance of ever going to a university. So a counter selection process has now reached another stage and the country is bled almost white of people with go, dynamism and leadership.



Mr. SHANN (Australia): I have only one other question and it relates to Mr. Kadar. We have had evidence from three sources that on 1 November Mr. Kadar agreed to the Declaration of Neutrality and to the proposition that Hungary should leave the Warsaw Pact, and even went so far as to say that this would be the end of him and the end of the Communist Party but that as a Hungarian he had no alternative but to agree with it. That was in the afternoon. At 10 o'clock in the evening he left the Parliament building and finally popped up in Szolnok on 4 November, and in the early morning he said that he had left the Government on the 1st and that the Government was counter-revolutionary, and so on, and that he was forming a new party and a new government. In broadcasts before 1 November and on 1 November he had said that the revolution was not a counter-revolution, that it was a manifestation of the Hungarian people's desire for freedom, yet now he is saying precisely the opposite in public declarations, which certainly makes him look inconsistent to say the least. Some explanation of this may be fear that he would lose his position, that he might again be subjected to the sort of tortures he was subjected to under Mr. Rakosi, which were very severe, but I would be grateful if you would give me your own view as to how it is that a man like Mr. Kadar could turn in such an extraordinary circle in such a very short time.

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): I have already mentioned that I have written a lot about Kadar, including long essays which have not been published in this country but in others. I have a theory about him which is connected with the Communist Party system of teaching people — or rather maiming people's minds — and I think Kadar came out of gaol with a sort of split personality. All his actions since he left gaol showed that he could alternate between two opposites on the same day. It was not only between 1 and 4 November that he changed; he often changed after he came out of gaol. He would show himself loyal for a while and then betray people, and that went on. But I think the fact that he sneaked out of the Parliament building on 1 November is not connected with Kadar's personality because with him went Mr. Muennich, who is quite a different type of man — a big, solid, astute, quiet person with nothing schizophrenic about him — and several others. They must have received instructions and they



had different private reasons perhaps for following these instructions, but we only know that they all followed them. You know that Kadar founded his new Communist Party that day. He made appointments for the next day with various people at Party headquarters -- you probably have reports about that -- so it can be proved that at seven o'clock at night Kadar thought he would still be a member of Mr. Nagy's Government the following day and would have discussions with people in his party's secretariat. I think he received instructions from the Soviet Command, but unfortunately I have no theory as to why he followed those instructions.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): Well, of course it is that I am interested in -- why he followed those instructions. It is a fact, is it not, that even months before the revolution there were many people in Hungary who thought that it was in the person of Kadar that the future of Hungary possibly rested and not in the person of Nagy, and that it was he who might be able to guide the country to a certain amount of freedom from the Soviet Union, perhaps in the same way as Mr. Gomulka?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): As far as I know that sort of feeling existed until about May 1956, and there were many people who believed that Kadar would be the man, but then came the magnetophone incident, news of which spread, and people started to turn. Even those who until then had been pro-Kadar turned against him, and I do not believe that a month before the revolution there were many informed people among the university students and the writers and the workers who had any hopes of Kadar.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I did not say a month, I said months.

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): Well, yes, until May that was so and then the magnetophone incident changed it.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): In your statement at our previous meeting when you spoke of the order of events in the revolution you mentioned inter alia one member of the Catholic Church --



Cardinal Mindszenty. You mentioned particularly the speech he made at that time and told us, if I understood you correctly, that this had possibly been misinterpreted. You said that the Cardinal did not demand the return of Church properties. If this is so, would you be good enough to tell us what the attitude of the Cardinal was at that time. What reference did he make to the position of the Church vis-a-vis the revolution and what was Cardinal Mindszenty's exact attitude at that time as a former property owner?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): I would mention that the central revolutionary armed forces council appointed me liaison officer with the foreign press and I spoke to a number of Western newspapermen who interviewed Cardinal Mindszenty without anyone else being present. Afterwards Mr. Cavendish of United Press and Mr. Davidson of the Daily Herald and others told me that they had a personal interview with Cardinal Mindszenty and had been told by him that he approved generally of the revolution and of its general character and that he wanted national unity. They said that he behaved in a positive manner. General Maleter visited Cardinal Mindszenty too. He did not tell us what they talked about but when he came out he was very pleased and we were told in the Parliament by Premier Nagy's entourage that we had nothing to fear from the Cardinal's Saturday evening speech. So to the best of my knowledge the leaders of the revolution -- Premier Nagy and General Maleter included -- were convinced that Cardinal Mindszenty took a positive stand as regards the revolution. Naturally he did not make this very obvious to the Communist rulers but that was only to be expected. I read his speech again yesterday and, as I have said, I do not think there is anything in it which could be construed to indicate that he wanted the return of Church lands.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABRIGAT (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): Nonetheless the speech of the Cardinal contained an allusion to land ownership. Does the fact that he did not speak of the return of the land mean that the Church renounced completely any right to those properties?



Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): In the pastoral letter in 1945 the Church approved of land reform and later on, under the open dictatorship of the Communist regime, when Catholic leaders — mainly in gaol — discussed the future they were always of opinion that the only thing which could not be restored was the land and that the peasants should keep their smallholdings.



(Mr. Paloczi-Horvath)

Some of them thought that later on when the State became financially stronger they might get some indemnity for their losses, but to the best of my knowledge Cardinal Mindszenty did not want to get back the land.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): I have received information from certain people who are interested in the work of this Committee, calling our attention to the fact that various trials have taken place since the revolution and sentences have been given against the participants in the revolution and against General Maleter. Do you know whether undue speed was used in connexion with these condemnations, and whether any such death sentences have been carried out? Do you know anything about General Maleter and the action that was taken against him?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): General Maleter and Mr. Alexander Kopacsi who was deputy-chief of the revolutionary armed forces' council, were accused of a counter-revolutionary coup d'état but their trial has not yet taken place. Of those trials which have taken place, as you probably know, one of the accused told the President of the court that he was maltreated. We may conclude that they used the same methods as in the Rajk trial, not letting people sleep, and using all kinds of torture. It was clear they meant to arrest everyone who took part in any way in the revolution.

According to the Hungarian newspaper Nepszabadsag some 174 sentences have been passed up to now, but rumour, and Western correspondents, put the figure very much higher. I do not know.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): Do you know whether any death sentences were actually carried out after the revolution?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): The Hungarian radio and official newspaper reports mentioned several dozen cases both in Budapest and in the country where sentences were carried out an hour after they were passed. The newspaper Nepszabadsag also reported this.



Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): According to what you say, these executions were published in the newspapers and spoken of over the radio?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): Yes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): Thank you so much.

The CHAIRMAN: I have one question: we have had some evidence that Kadar, after having formed his government on 4 November, attempted to form a coalition government and to have negotiations with other parties to get them to join his government, but that the Russians prevented such negotiations. Do you know anything about that?

Mr. PALOCZI-HORVATH (spoke in English): I only know one thing; until 14 or 15 November Kadar in his negotiations with the Budapest Workers' Council, the writers' association and other bodies showed himself willing to consider their various demands. We sent a delegation to Parliament. I do not know the exact date but it was 14, 15 or 16 November when we saw the commander-in-chief, Marshal Koniev, who was concerned in the Warsaw Pact, coming along the corridor with a lot of Soviet officers. Many of us saw him at that time in the Parliament building, and when on 17 or 18 November Kadar made his first about-turn we concluded that Marshal Koniev's presence had something to do with it. On studying the official reports about Kadar in the newspaper, we saw that he made official declarations within a week which were quite contradictory, and we supposed the cause of this was Soviet intervention.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any further questions? We thank you once more.

Mr. Paloczi-Horvath withdrew.



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

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Committee I bid you welcome, and I ask you to give us your statement.

WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): I was a lawyer in Budapest from 1939 onwards, and a member of the Smallholders' Party. After the war and during the Russian occupation the Smallholders' Party took a very active part and I participated in organizing the party in the provinces. At the time of the elections in the fall of 1945 I was a candidate for office. The parties united in order to present more effective opposition to the Communists, while the Communists — under the leadership of Rakosi — wanted to arrange matters so that the political parties would have their least intellectual elements nominated as candidates. For that reason my name was pushed off the list. I was very distressed at this disloyal behaviour by the Communist Party and I became forced to emigrate. I spent only an hour and a half in Austria when the illness of my mother prompted me to return to occupied Hungary illegally so that I could have a last glimpse of her. It was then that I was arrested by the Hungarian political police, who questioned me, using very brutal methods, for fourteen days, and then handed me over to the Russian NKVD which was operating in Hungary. I was held prisoner in a damp prison for ten months and interrogated by the Russians and was then brought before a Russian military tribunal in Baden in the Russian zone of Austria. Here I was sentenced to twenty-five years' hard labour and was taken to Russia. Special prisoner-carrying trains were organized to take people, mostly political prisoners, to Russia from occupied Europe, and the train in which I was had about 800 of us.

I stayed in Russia until 1955, and in the fall of that year the situation in Russia had changed. Naturally we did not know at the time the exact reason for this, but foreigners were put into national groups and returned to their own countries. I was with the Hungarian group of about 600 and that is how I returned to Hungary.

The Hungarian authorities took us over and continued to question us; we were kept in prison for eleven months without trial, but we received no information



of the accusations against us. So it was that I was freed on 8 October, when the new Communists were trying to obtain the goodwill of the people, after the downfall of Rakosi, by gradually freeing the political prisoners. I spent a few days with my family and then went on to Nagy-Alfoeld near the Tisza River in the south of Hungary to visit some other relations. Thus the events of 23 October 1956 found me in the southern part of Hungary.

I want to assist the Committee as much as possible, and perhaps you would indicate how you would like me to proceed.

Mr. SHANN (Australia): I think it would help if the witness would tell us how long he stayed in the southern part of Hungary, if while there he witnessed revolutionary events, when he returned to Budapest, and what was his experience of the revolution — if any — in Budapest.



WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): The revolution which had broken out on the 23rd spread to the southern parts of Hungary on the 24th. I was in one of the main provincial towns on the Tisza river and there the students and high school scholars held a meeting during which they formulated their demands. Those demands included the re-establishment of democracy in Hungary and the withdrawal of Russian troops. They all wished to join their Budapest comrades in their revolt. The workers, including the young industrial workers, started an uprising in the agricultural region which surrounds the town in which I was and various groups of revolutionaries made contact with one another. They presented their demands to the police and to the army of the AVH and succeeded without any bloodshed in reorganizing that whole section of the countryside; the police and the AVH recognized that a movement of great strength had started which was supported by every member of the population. The bourgeoisie, who clearly remembered their experiences of the last twelve years, were rather afraid to associate themselves with the revolution and were more careful. It was the youth who assumed authority; they reorganized the administration of the city and the entire province and forced the leaders of the councils to resign from their posts. The youth were convinced that there would be no reprisals and did not suspect that a reign of terrorism would ensue. As a matter of fact, the revolutionaries took great care that there should be no bloodshed and did not harm the AVH. The AVH scattered, abandoned their arms and the arsenals thus enabling the revolutionaries to take possession of them. The latter only armed themselves in case they should be forced to fight. They destroyed the Russian memorials and monuments. I should like to repeat that there was absolutely no bloodshed in that region; the transfer of authority was effected smoothly. Once this had happened it seemed as if there were a great sigh of relief and everybody was most optimistic. When my presence in the town was discovered the revolutionaries asked me -- as I had been one of the more senior leaders of the Smallholders' Party -- to help re-create the parties if and when I returned to Budapest. There had been no previous preparation for the revolt; it took place quite spontaneously. I participated in the reorganization of the political parties which, as a matter of fact, only started five or six days later. I was a party to all the discussions pertaining to the reorganization. It was decided that the political framework to



be set up would be representative of all the different political parties thus providing a good foundation for a government which would become gradually stronger because it would be supported by a well-organized party and therefore would be in a strong position to negotiate with the Russians. The chief object of those negotiations was to be, of course, the withdrawal of Russian troops.

The local leaders of the political parties asked me to go to south-western Hungary and see Bela Kovacs, an ex-Cabinet Minister, who had also been a member of the Smallholders' Party. He had been a Cabinet Minister until January 1947. We were both in the same Russian prison and we had come home together. I went to Pecs, where the uranium mines were, and there I contacted the Revolutionary Council which had just met. During the night of 31 October I talked with them, we exchanged experiences, and co-ordinated all our information. The parties in Pecs asked me to inform the authorities in Budapest of the events which had taken place in Pecs and also of their demands. Those demands pertained mostly to the army. As a matter of fact Russian troop movements were already starting in Trans-Danubia but in the south east no troops were moving. The aim of the troop movements in Trans-Danubia was to segregate the west of Hungary and the capital from the rest of Europe, particularly from Austria. Thus, when I travelled from Tisza to Pecs I did not encounter any Russian troops but during my journey from Pecs to Budapest I saw many Russian armoured cars and motorized units. At that time the Russians had not intervened in the revolution; even though troops were moving nobody could foresee the turn of events, nor the intentions of the Russians, because Imre Nagy was still negotiating with them. When I reached Budapest I returned to the national council of the Smallholders' Party, which had already been organized, and I informed them of the demands of the Pecs Smallholders' Party. On 3 November I visited my doctor for a physical examination because I had only recently emerged from prison. He ordered me to go into a rest home; I was there when the Russians attacked for the second time. The Russians advanced with huge armoured units from the western side of Budapest, that is from Bicske, and the wounded started to arrive at the rest home. I myself tried to organize the defence but this was not necessary because we were not in the main path of the Russian advance. The Russians just went through the town and re-grouped their units in the centre.



(Witness MMM)

The Committee may wish to question me. I should just like to repeat that absolutely no counter-revolutionary manifestations took place during the days to which I referred. The principal elements of the revolution were composed of young people, the students and the workers; all they wanted was freedom and the liberation of Hungary from Russian domination. They had no notion of what type of political framework they desired for the future.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): The witness spoke of the ideas which were put forward on 23 October regarding better representation for all the different political parties in the Government. Can he give us some particulars as to the different political parties and the ideas which they held at that time?

WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): The two principal political parties which should be mentioned were the Social Democratic Party, which was then disassociated from the fusion under the Rakosi group, and the Smallholders' Party. The former wanted to see its own members reinstated and its old principles of government re-established. The latter wanted political independence and wanted to revert to its old principles of government which it had been forced to abandon; it had found itself in the position of being obliged to adopt principles which did not correspond to its real aim at all.



They had only one aim and one purpose at the time of the outbreak of the revolution and that was to be able to express their loyalty vis-à-vis the Imre Nagy coalition and to give it a certain political basis which would have greater psychological force and strength and ensure greater support for the Imre Nagy Government. At first they felt uncertain, as they did not know what the great majority of the people wanted so that the purpose here was purely temporary but at the same time they wanted to include as many classes of the people as possible in order to show externally all the strength they could for Imre Nagy when he was negotiating with the Russians. Temporarily, no detailed programme of principles was laid down but only the relationship of the old ideas to the situation in connexion with Imre Nagy. The people accepted Imre Nagy temporarily. Everyone knew Imre Nagy was a Communist but they felt that -- if only for a short time -- it would be better and more convenient to have Imre Nagy, especially as no one seemed more appropriate for the immediate purpose. He was considered to be the only one who might possibly achieve anything against the Russians as he was an old Moscow-educated Communist and had connexions. Even the Russians could not see in him an absolute opponent of Russian communistic ideals. The people generally, and the parties, saw this quite clearly and thought it convenient for the time being to support Imre Nagy in order to give him more strength to conduct negotiations with the Russians. No one thought of making this a permanent coalition Government; it was a purely temporary measure. The older parties considered this a transitional period during which Imre Nagy and his coalition Government might be allowed to function. The reason for speeding up the re-organization of these parties was to give the Imre Nagy coalition Government more support in its difficult task.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): What distinction do you make between the Social Democratic Party and the old Smallholders' Party? What is the difference from the point of view of ideology specifically?



WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): It is difficult to answer that question. For example, the Social Democratic Party on its old basis held to Marxist ideals -- therefore on a basis of principle they had no common basis. It was only a loyalty within the framework of parliamentarianism -- the free expression of political ideas and the carrying on of free parliamentary life.

The Smallholders' Party was a party of small people. It had the confidence mostly of the peasants and lower middle class people. There was a certain loyalty which would have given a framework for a regular parliamentary life which before the Rakosi period, of course, had not existed since 1947.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): The Smallholders Party, which had the confidence of the peasant masses: was this a personal confidence in the party leaders or was it due to the political or economic theories which were held by that Party?

WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): In the first place, it was the political theories of the Party which were approved by the Hungarian masses -- especially the peasants -- and the representatives sent to Parliament were in fact exponents of the ideas of the masses because they were elected by the masses. Many of those who represented this Party in Parliament were simple people.

The Smallholders' Party was the party of the small bourgeoisie, the lower middle classes and the peasants so that it was flexible and modern enough to keep step with the movements of the times -- for instance, as to agrarian reform; on that it took a position which the people wanted. It made the programme that the people wanted its own programme and therefore the people had confidence in it.

In spite of the Russians who were occupying Hungary the absolute majority of the people, who had voted for this party in 1945, could not be deterred by terrorism and oppression -- the people supported it and were faithful to it. The Hungarian peasantry and the lower middle class were quite strongly individualistic and did not think very highly of co-operative forms of economic life or Marxism. These people wanted to operate on an individual basis and in fact did so.



Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): If I understand you correctly the important factor in the Smallholders' Party is its tendency against collectivization.

WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): As was also shown by the experience of the revolution, the first activities of the peasantry were to disband and split up the so-called co-operatives. There were great demonstrations and the first thing they decided was that as these agricultural co-operatives had caused a great deal of trouble for the people they should be disbanded.

The first thing they did was to rush to meetings and immediately adopt resolutions and within a few days they started to distribute the land which had been taken into the collectives. The people who wanted to disband the collectives were people who had previously had eleven or twelve or perhaps twenty hectares of land. There were also others who shared in this distribution of land and it was carried on very quickly and very energetically. There was no bloodshed, terror or force in connexion with this distribution in those rural areas where I was present.

It was very interesting to observe that the collective small businesses and shops in the villages were not broken up quite so quickly as were the agricultural collectives. The breaking up of the agricultural collectives was the first thing that the peasants rushed to do at the time of the revolution. Everywhere you could see that happening, the breaking up of the kholkhozes and the distribution of the land.

The collective system had been a great burden upon the people. It was a system that threatened them with serious punishments if they did not fulfil their quotas and at the same time it did not give them an adequate standard of living. The small peasant knew that on his own little bit of property he could produce more than the collectives did. At the time I left the country that was the situation.

Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): What in your opinion was the proportion of peasants compared to the rest of the population in Hungary?



WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): I would say about sixty or sixty-five per cent of the Hungarian population were peasants, that is to say, people who were more or less immediately concerned with the tilling of the soil, so that it was the agricultural people and the agricultural element who had the absolute majority and domination and gave the whole of Hungarian society its character.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): You have spoken to us several times of the peasants, are you speaking of the peasants who are small landowners or are you speaking of tenant farmers.

WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): I was speaking of people who owned land -- the small landowners. It is this group that gave Hungarian society its character. There were relatively few non-landowning peasants. They did not comprise a separate category. In some cases, a peasant who owned a few hectares of land might rent a few additional hectares from a neighbour but that was a very small group. In fact there was no social or economic distinction between the two groups. On the other hand, you could distinguish between the small landowner and the workers on the large estates because by then the large estates had ceased to exist and the people who had worked on them had already gone to work in the cities, in factories or elsewhere, and this element was not present now in the recent revolution.



It was the small land owners who had been forced into the kholkhozes who were no longer willing to accept the lower standard of living associated with the collectives. This standard was much lower than before the collectives came into existence.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): Those land owners, and you yourself as a member of the Smallholders' Party, chose Imre Nagy, a communist, to undo what Imre Nagy, the communist, considered to be one of the main props of Communism, namely collective ownership?

WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): As to Imre Nagy, I must remark here that he had already in 1953 recognized the difficulties and was then of the opinion that the small collectives should be retrenched. It was for this reason that he was dismissed and had to leave after 1953; so that he had already realized the difficulties which could not be solved in Hungary. As to his recent position in 1956, it was a matter of necessity. No one was in sight who was in a position to secure the withdrawal of the Russian troops. No one thought that Imre Nagy would continue to form a Communist regime or collectives in the future. Communism would have been in a difficult situation had the revolution triumphed, particularly because it was the young people, brought up and educated under the communist system, who at all costs wanted and demanded the ending of the communist order and the introduction of individual freedom. As I heard the people talk and heard young spokesmen put forward their views at meetings, they all spoke of and wanted a democracy of free enterprise and private enterprise; and the name and the whole idea of communism became very unpopular in Hungary because the oppression and the falling standard of living accompanying it caused everyone to rise against it, even and perhaps especially the younger people to whom the communist order had granted privileges in the attempt to keep them on the side of communism. The youth of the country, however, realizing the impossible world brought into existence by Communist ideas, turned against their tutors. It was the youth of the country who courageously came to the front, shedding their own blood in order to bring about a new and better life for themselves and the country as a whole. I do not know whether I have answered the question satisfactorily.



Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): Your thought is very important for us, and I should like to understand it better. Did you mean to say that Imre Nagy could be a communist in favour of the private ownership of land?

WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): The people knew Imre Nagy, and were quite clear as to his tendency, because as a matter of fact he began the reform of communism in 1953. He wanted a so-called national communism, something like that which Tito had introduced in Yugoslavia. This is the principle he followed, and as his speeches and declarations during the recent revolution were very popular and aroused such confidence in his person, the people thought that he alone could achieve a united front against the Russians. The people expected that Imre Nagy would abandon the principles of communism and become the standard bearer of a parliamentary party. This could be seen in all his speeches, and he emphasized it, so that in a transitional way there was a loyalty towards him. The idea was that even though he is a communist we recognize and accept his good intentions and ask him to help us temporarily in our common problem at this time, and he did in fact form a coalition government, including in his government people from other parties, parties which had been most popular before the revolution — for example Bela Kovacs, General Maleter and Anna Kethly. People from the old social democratic parties of very high repute were immediately called in by him, so that as far as the people could see in the situation at that time he was well-intentioned and secured their loyalty; the people thought he wanted to realize their aspirations.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ-FABREGAT (Uruguay)(interpretation from Spanish): Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN: You mentioned that you were sentenced by a Russian military tribunal to twenty-five years' hard labour, afterwards being deported to Russia. May I ask the name of the town to which you were deported, and when?



WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): When I returned illegally from the West in the summer of 1947 in order to visit my sick mother the Hungarian authorities arrested me and after interrogating and torturing me for two weeks handed me over to the Russians. The Russians kept me under observation for ten months in prison in the Soviet zone of Austria, at Baden and after ten months of questioning sentenced me to twenty-five years for spying. All foreigners, I must note, were sentenced for spying, though the Russians had no proof and have not had up to the present day. Nevertheless, I met many foreigners in camp who had been accused of spying, whether there was any basis for the charge or not. There were thousands of these cases. These were the cases under so-called Article 58, paragraph 6. I was a "spy" because I came back to Hungary from the West, but I was never confronted with a witness against me, I was just accused of things which they felt it necessary to use to make me appear guilty. When the Stalin-Beria system was ended in Russia late in 1953 and the beginning of 1954, it was announced in the camps that anyone having any complaint against his sentence or against its being unjust should make an application, and amnesties were granted to people in great droves. My case was taken into consideration and I was taken to Moscow, where my case was a particular example as I had been sentenced without any proof at all. The trial in Moscow was for the purpose of giving Beria's people enough information, but there was no proof, no documentary proof whatever brought against me, and no witnesses were produced, so that when I made my "confession" in the spring of 1947 they told me, "You have been found guilty by Moscow, but you will be freed fairly soon and sent home". I said, "I do not believe it", but they laughed and said, "You can be reassured now". After one and a half years they handed me back to the Hungarian authorities and, as far as we could see, all foreigners were sent back from Russia.

The CHAIRMAN: I just wanted to ascertain whether the Russian military authorities, as early as 1947-1948, always interfered with Hungarians, even if at the request of Hungarians.



WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): Yes, the Russians did interfere. They took people from the Hungarian authorities and the AVH by the thousand. They would take them from the AVH prisons in the middle of the night in sealed trucks to NKVD prisons, where interrogation would be carried out in the cells, and this is what happened to me. For fourteen days they tortured and beat me in the AVH prison and I still have the marks -- for instance I have no teeth -- but evidently the AVH either did not have enough time or were not sufficiently trained to get confessions from people. The Russians had plenty of time at their disposal and they had the necessary training. I was in the AVH prison to begin with and in the few days before they took me to a Russian prison there were Russian officers interrogating me in the middle of the night. After three or four such interrogations they came one night, chained me and put me in a covered truck. In this way I was transferred to a Russian prison, and it did not only happen to me, it was the general practice. Later I met crowds of people who had been similarly treated. Tens of thousands of people were taken from Austria, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria and Rumania into Russia and the camps were full. There was a whole system of camps containing people from outside Russia.

As regards Hungary, there was a collecting prison at Sopron-Koehida and later the prisoners were taken in cars to Neunkirchen in the Soviet zone of Austria where they were kept until they numbered six or seven hundred, when they were put in cars with iron bars and taken to Russia. Lemberg-Lvov was the first stop in Russia. There was a huge political prison there where large numbers of people arrived every day from different places. From there, according to the state of their health or other conditions, they were distributed to many different parts of Russia -- to Central Asia and Siberia. They were taken from the so-called Peresila prisons deep into Soviet Russia. The camp at Lemberg-Lvov was a transit camp where the people were collected and then distributed farther east. I went through this and there were thousands of others who shared the same fate.

The CHAIRMAN: In my opinion you have given us very important information on this problem. You mentioned a certain article 58, paragraph 6, I think. Can you tell us some more about this? Is that Russian or Hungarian?



WITNESS MMM (interpretation from Hungarian): It is the paragraph about spying in the Russian criminal code on the basis of which even non-Russians were tried. I was sentenced on Austrian territory as a Hungarian on a charge of spying against the Hungarian so-called People's Democracy and the Austrian Democratic Republic. Since I am a lawyer I was perhaps better able than most to appreciate the strangeness of this. Austria at that time was not even in the bloc of so-called democratic republics. Austria had an independent government but for my conduct against the interests of the Austrian Democratic Republic and against the Hungarian People's Democracy I was sentenced by a Russian tribunal. I must say that the level of the Russian tribunal is very low and the members do not understand even the most primitive principles of judicial procedure. They find people guilty by the thousand as they are ordered. On the tribunal that tried me there were three army officers -- a major and two captains -- a stenographic reporter and an interpreter, all military, and in half an hour I was sentenced to twenty-five years' imprisonment.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any more questions? Then we thank you for coming here.

Witness MMM withdrew.

The CHAIRMAN: This concludes our proceedings in London and the next meeting will take place in Geneva on Wednesday at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.