

HUNGARIAN DAILY BACKGROUND

(Up to 1800 hours Dec. 10)

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The Struggle of the KADAR Government against the Workers

Most important events of the past 48 hours:

1. Demonstrations and armed clashes in several provincial towns;
2. The HUNGARIST Central Workers' Council called a 48 hours strike;
3. The President issued a decree on martial law and on the demobilization of armed workers' guards in factories;
4. The government gave orders for the liquidation of the central organs of workers' councils.

All these events are connected with the KADAR government's offensive to break down the resistance of the workers' councils and that of workers in general.

1.) Clashes in the Provinces

According to Reuters and AP reports bloody demonstrations took place during the afternoon of December 8 in SALGOTARJAN, a mining town in northern Hungary, in TATABANTA, a mining town West of BUDAPEST, in the coal and uranium areas near PÉCS, in BÉKÉSCSABA, a town in eastern Hungary, and in BATTONYA, near the Hungarian-Romanian border. In SALGOTARJAN and BÉKÉSCSABA the demonstrators demanded the release of members of the workers' councils, in TATABANTA the release of the police commissar. The reason for the PÉCS and BATTONYA demonstrations is unknown. They presumably protested against the arrests, as the HUNGARIST demonstrations and local strikes going on since December 7 broke out as a result of the arrests. The number of victims and casualties is unknown. Radio BUDAPEST also admitted the SALGOTARJAN, TATABANTA, BÉKÉSCSABA and BATTONYA clashes. We know from a report by Marie NISSELD (December 10) that demonstrations also took place in NISSELD, and probably the list is not yet complete.

2.) The General Strike

Besides mass demonstrations, the HUNGARIST Central Workers' Council also took steps for the release of those arrested. The government did not reply to the December 8 proclamation of the Central Workers' Council. In spite of this, delegates of the workers' councils held another discussion with KADAR on December 8 but without any result. The government was not prepared to release the prisoners, whose number is unknown. According to a Radio NISSELD communique the number of persons arrested amounts to over 'several hundred.'

Yet a few persons have been released. For example, workers' representatives of the Ganz Shipyard, the HUNGARIST Taxi-Cab Company and the Hungarian State Railways.

Following unsuccessful negotiations with KAHAN on December 8 the SEDAPROF Central Workers' Council worked out a plan. Probably the most important point of this plan is the 48 hours strike, day to last from 2400 hours on December 10 until 2400 hours on December 11. The resolution said the government had ignored a statement by the council about the arrest and gave no answer to it. "Thus proving that it ignores the reality of Hungarian workers and their chosen representatives. Meanwhile they arrest and take away the presidents and members of workers' councils."

In the early morning hours telecommunication with abroad was cut off, without giving any explanation. It was not possible to make calls even to SEDAPROF. (B-52)

Radio BUDAPEST reported (December 10, 0530 hours) that on Sunday morning police forces surrounded the headquarters of the SEDAPROF workers' councils and several factories.

(B-53)

At 0722 hours today, Radio BUDAPEST called upon Communists to come and help "to defend the power of the workers." It was said that "agents arrived from the capital to organize strikes and demonstrations."

3.) The Decree of the President on Martial Law

The President published a Decree, dated December 9, (Radio BUDAPEST, 2000 hours) ordering martial law for certain crimes, to be effective all over the country as from 1800 hours on December 11. This measure was necessary because "large quantities of ammunition" are in the hands of the enemies of the People's Republic, who hinder the restoration of order and constitute a danger to personal safety and security of property.

The probable reason for the renewed proclamation of the martial law was that the demonstrations which flared up in BUDAPEST and in various parts of the country led to armed clashes. Simultaneously with proclaiming martial law the government also issued a decree regulating the carrying of arms of factory workers. Allegedly workers' guards have to report their store of arms and obtain a license for same. Persons responsible for reporting and those whose license was refused and yet admitted to carry in their weapons, will come under the martial law. This decree probably serves the purpose of depriving the workers of their weapons.

The martial law proclaimed yesterday was preceded by one declared on October 24 by the Cabinet on behalf of László NAGY. It came into effect immediately, yet the application was postponed by various exempting limits and thus was not put into effect at all. According to the October 20 statement (transmitted by Radio BUDAPEST) of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chief Prosecutor's Department, the declaration of the martial law was illegal because the government had no statutory authorization. According to the Revolutionary Committee as one was sentenced by the martial law and those arrested were released by setting aside criminal procedure.

On November 10 the President issued a decree which, in the case of certain crimes, allowed for a simplified criminal procedure. Accordingly criminal courts can pass a sentence within 24 hours without indictment.

4.) The Government orders the Liquidation of Central Workers' Councils

To account for the exceptional measures taken (martial law, decree regulating the carrying of arms of workers' guards in factories) the government issued a statement in the evening hours, according to which the counter-revolution is trying to use the workers' organs, workers' councils in particular, for its own purposes. In spite of government warnings, district organs of the workers' councils have been set up. "At the national conference held illegally during the past few days the majority of SOVIET workers' councils invited to bloodshed, armed provocations and strikes." Therefore the government terminated the functioning of these councils with immediate effect.

This government statement does not refer to the workers' councils within individual factories, for whom the government promises assistance. The help is mainly aimed at dissolving "agitated elements."

The government statement is in contrast to KADAN's attitude so far, for on November 22 he recognized the SOVIET Central Workers' Council as an organ representing the workers and advising the government. The Premier also promised that the radio and the press will announce the statements of the workers' councils, which was done in certain cases. Thus in November the government recognized this body and probably that is why workers' councils in the provinces were set up. This agreement was arrived at by the SOVIET Central Workers' Council with the 48 hours strike called for on November 21, when it demanded that the government should recognize it as the body representing the workers. This demand was fulfilled on November 22 and consequently work was partially resumed.

It is possible that with the concessions made in November KADAN intended to gain time in order to gather strength and to quickly organize an armed police, loyal to the government.

Judging from the arrest of members of the workers' councils, from the two decrees issued and the termination of functioning of district councils, the aim of the government is to dissolve the bodies which held the councils together and thereby disrupt the political unity of the workers. It also wants to isolate the workers' councils of individual factories in order to form the composition of their members to its own advantage.

The success of these tactics depends on the Soviet help and on the attitude of the factory workers' councils. In the past factory workers' councils were more independent than central organs and insisted most of the time on continuing to strike despite the central councils.