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HUNGARIAN DAILY BACKGROUND

(Up to 1200 hours December 12)

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DIST.1. The General Strike

On the basis of reports from Radio KOSSUTH, the correspondent of "Borba" and Western news agencies in BUDAPEST, it can be ascertained that the BUDAPEST Central Workers' Council's call to a 48-hour strike was followed by the overwhelming majority of the workers on the first day of the strike.

Bus and tram-traffic stopped in BUDAPEST. Radio KOSSUTH and the BUDAPEST correspondent of TASS attributes this to the fact that armed counter-revolutionaries put mines on the rails and shot at the tram cars.

The Bester correspondent saw smoke coming from only very few factory chimneys. The GOSPEL Iron Works, employing 38,000 workers, came to a complete standstill, although the radio broadcast several times the appeal of the GOSPEL Workers' Council to resume work. At 1200 hours Radio KOSSUTH gave a commentary on the situation in the capital and provinces. It was unable to say whether even a single factory was working. It spoke of factories where the workers arrived but were unable to work owing to power-shortage. It is impossible to draw a dividing line between stoppage of work due to the strike or to power shortage. It is a fact, however, that coal and power shortages play an important role in the stoppage of the factories.

The "Borba" correspondent gives the following picture:

"In the early afternoon hours (December 11) the overwhelming majority of BUDAPEST factories were empty and city traffic at a standstill. This time even food-stores remained closed. Only a few restaurants and cinemas were open. The sun-fringed streets were crowded."

It is impossible to get an accurate picture of the whole country because tele-communications with provincial towns were irregular. The "Borba" correspondent reports that there was a general strike in DEBRECEN. Not even food-stores were open. There was no electric current in SZEGED, therefore hardly any work was done. VESEPREM miners were striking. In ESZAK, 100 kilometers from BUDAPEST, no factories were working. The SZOR factories stopped work completely.

Western correspondents do not report on the situation in the

mines. In the running commentary of Radio BUDAPEST only two mines of county NAGYRAD, one IONELC and one PECS mine were mentioned, where approximately 6,100 miners were said to be at work. According to the report, of these 6,100 miners 1,434 worked in the two county NAGYRAD mines, but only 315 of them went down the pits.

The BUDAPEST radio did not mention the big coalmines, those of TATABANTA and county BORSOD. It seems that even fewer workers reported there than elsewhere.

At noon, December 12, Radio PECS broadcast a lethargic article from which it appears that the whole city is in the state of general strike. According to the article, the strikes have so far caused 18 billion forints worth of damage to the people's economy. János KALAS stated that every day of the strike means a production stoppage of 300 million forints.

In connection with the miners' strike, we should mention that even before the general strike announcement, the opinion prevailed that only enough coal should be produced to cover local needs. It is indicative of the decrease in coal deliveries that the December 11 article of "Nepeszer" complained about the TATA-BANTA and DOROG mines, which on November 23 concluded a deal with the BUDAPEST health institutes for the transport of a daily 400 tons of coal. So far, not an ounce of coal had arrived. The BUDAPEST gas works was able to continue gas production only because it was provided with 100 wagons of coal by the CSERTEL iron enterprise. "It is hoped that the gas works will soon receive some lignite from the consignment which the International Red Cross will deliver," said Radio BUDAPEST on December 11. There are also cases of certain mines concluding a deal with foodshops, according to which they would deliver coal in exchange for foodstuffs.

Most of the mines are in a very neglected state. "Nepeszer," the trade unions' daily, reported on the PECS BEECKENYI pit, in which the maintenance troops last worked 18 October.

2. Demonstrations in BUDAPEST and the Provinces

According to the "Berbe" correspondent, and BUDAPEST AFP reports, demonstrations took place simultaneously with the strike in EGER and MISKOLC. 2,000 people demonstrated in EGER on December 10 and 3,000 on December 11. These marched to the Soviet headquarters and demanded the release of arrested workers' council members. The Soviet Command released them and the demonstrators left quietly. At MISKOLC, too, demonstrations took place on both days. "Berbe" reports that on the first day the demonstrators occupied the building of the local editorial offices.

The demonstrators had three demands:

1. The release of arrested workers' council members.
2. The state apparatus should be rid of persons compromised in the RAKOSI era.
3. Acknowledgment of the right of the workers councils to be present when the country's policy is decided.
3. Reports on Flare-up of Partisan Fighting

From BELGRADE (Dexter and AP) and from VIENNA (McCormac) came reports that partisan fights flared up at several places. According to these reports, in the mountains of the FICS area, where the uranium mines are, "several hundreds of workers and miners, armed with rifles and light machine guns," fight against the government police troops. AP reports from BELGRADE that in BUDAPEST (formerly STALINVAROS) and at BONYHASY, KOMAROM and also round the uranium mines near FICS, strong partisan fighting flared up within the past 48 hours. At the same time, AP reports from BUDAPEST (December 11) that Soviet troops surrounded the MARGHATAS hill, north-west of BUDAPEST, where revolutionary artillerymen armed with machine guns were said to be hiding. Jozse MACCOROMAC was informed that the armed resistance of the Hungarian revolutionaries was organized by Lieut.-Gen. Bela KIRALI, who obtained a leading position in the course of the October revolution.

We had received news about certain partisan groups operating since the second Soviet attack, particularly in the FICS area. But this is the first time we have had such frequent reports.

4. Janos KADAR's conversation with Workers' Delegation

On December 11 Janos KADAR received a group of workers from the factories of the IX district. The substance of their conversation was reportedly broadcast on Radio KOSZUT. In it KADAR stated that the dissolution of the central workers' council and arrests occurring in these days was the "revolution's offensive against the counter-revolutionaries." When this was over -- probably by the end of next week -- the government would publish its program. KADAR declared that on the multi-party question, and freedom rights, he was prepared to go to the ultimate limit. He made only one proviso: he was not prepared to give up Socialism and the power of the people.

The tone of the KADAR statement is somewhat more lenient. It is perhaps this which gave support to talk of personal changes in the KADAR government.

According to BUDAPEST information received by the VIENNA "News Courier" the Russians want to put Lajos FIDES in the place of

KADAN, who has proved ineffective. Lajos FENK is a journalist, formerly connected with "Szabad Nep," and was editor-in-chief of the present Party organ: "Nepeszhedeg."

Neuter, referring to Yugoslav sources from BELGRADE, stated that on December 11 two Hungarian politicians, one Smalhofer and one Social Democrat, arrived in BUDAPEST, from their deportation in Rumania, to hold discussions with Soviet authorities on the expansion of the government. The names of the politicians were unknown. The VIENNA and BELGRADE news was not confirmed by any other sources.

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