

Background Research

THE CAREER OF JANOS KADAR

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Jacso Kadar was born on 26 May 1912 in Nagoly village (county Szeged). His original name was Csorvasszék. His father was an agricultural worker, his mother a day laborer. In his childhood Kadar helped on the land, worked for a swineherd as sheep-herd boy, then as a servant on a farm. Later Kadar's mother moved to Budapest with her two sons where she earned her living as a casual laborer, an under-janitor and by delivering papers. Kadar, after finishing primary school, attended the Vecsényi street higher elementary school. He also helped his mother to deliver papers and run errands. At 16, he became a tool-maker's apprentice; at 17 he joined the youth organization of the trade union of iron workers. In 1929, after three years of apprenticeship he became a tool-maker's assistant. For a time he was unable to get a job in his trade. In the summer of 1930 he worked at the warehouse of a carpet wholesaler; in the first part of 1931 he was unemployed. Later he was able to work in his trade at different places.

In September 1931, Kadar joined one of the local organizations of the Young Communist Workers' Association in Hungary (KIMSZ), and participated in its activities. This association had a structure similar to that of the Hungarian Communist Party (NCP) and served as a reserve for new cadres of the NCP; it functioned illegally.

During a demonstration he was arrested in November 1931 and released under remand after a three days' detention. He became a member of the Budapest north district of the KIMSZ committee and later secretary of KIMSZ for Great Budapest.

Joining Communist Party

In 1932 Kadar joined the Hungarian Communist Party and participated actively in its work. In 1933 he was arrested again, after being under police surveillance since 1931, and spent 17 months in prison. The NCP, very weak and having few members, was torn by factional struggles between emigrant Communists and those in Hungary. Thus, at the beginning of 1936, the Central Committee of the Communist Internationale held an investigation and established that mistakes had been committed in the activities of the Communists in Hungary. The members of the Central Committee were dismissed and given severe Party punishment. The Party was invested with new leaders who carried out their activities abroad. Kadar was arrested again, as the "black comrade" registered with the police. He was taken to the Vas prison, where he extended his Party relations, and formed a close friendship with Lajos Vas. In the fall of 1936 the leading body of the NCP in Hungary was reconstituted.

During the war Kadar played an active part in the resistance movement. In 1942 he became a member of the Central Committee of the MDP. Kadar was very close to Rajk, the true leader of the MDP in Hungary. In 1943, Kadar became one of the secretaries of the Central Committee. After the dissolution of the Communist Internationals in May 1943, the Central Committee of the MDP passed a resolution for the dissolution of itself. The emigrant faction did not approve of this liquidating resolution, but the Communist Party remained inactive till September 1944. In the meantime the Communists forced the so-called Peace party and Kadar became the secretary of its Central Committee. At the beginning of December 1944, the Peace party, the Social Democrat party, the Independent Smallholder party and the National Peasant party combined into the Hungarian National Independence Front. The propaganda work of the illegal Hungarian Front was shouldered by the Peace party. Kadar participated in the editing and circulation of illegal publications, "Szabad Nép" among them. He also cooperated with Antal Apró, Károly Kiss and László Rajk in the organization of partisan groups. In 1944 Kadar tried to get into contact with the general staff of the Yugoslav (Communist) partisans but was arrested near the river Tisza; a warrant had been out for his arrest since 1942. Kadar then going under the name of Lajos Luptak, got into the hands of the Gestapo, but succeeded in escaping. Around Christmas he went to Budapest, then left the city under Party orders — and tried to establish contact with the Russian military commandatura already on Hungarian territory at the time.

Between January and May 1945 Kadar was organizing the Budapest police. At the time László Rajk was at the head of the police. Kadar established close relations with Gábor Peter, head of the political police and later became the Budapest deputy chief of police. In 1945 the Hungarian Communist Party assigned him the task of organizing and directing the Budapest Party organization, as the successor to László Rajk. He became the secretary of the Great Budapest Party Committee. At the 1945 parliamentary elections Kadar was returned as the representative of counties Heves and Nagybánya. At the Third Party congress of the MDP, at the end of September and beginning of October 1945, he was elected deputy chief secretary, next to Rakosi. At the end of August 1947 he re-entered Parliament as the representative of the Great-Budapest electoral district. In June 1948, there took place the congress of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democrat party which resulted in both parties merging into the new Hungarian Workers' Party; Kadar was given a senior position in the new party. He became one of the 18 members of the Political Committee and the eight members of the secretariat, next to Rakosi, Gerő, Rajk, and Imre Nagy. The Party's First Secretary was Rakosi, its president was Arpad Szakaszi; its deputy secretaries were Farkas, Kadar and Marosán.

Minister of Interior: Rajk Tivadar

In August 1948, Kadar succeeded Rajk as Minister of the

Interior and in this capacity became the supreme director of the AVN which fell under his authority. He appointed Gabor Peter as its head. At the 1943 elections Kadar was elected to parliament as the representative of the Hungarian Independence Front for counties Heves and Nagrad-Mont. In December 1949 the AVN became an independent organization subordinated directly to the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers invested Kadar, as Minister of the Interior, with the power of ultimate superintendence over the AVN. During Kadar's term as the Ministry of the Interior, the Mindszenty and Rajk trials were held. In spite of his close relations with the Rajk family he played a minister role in the case. Mindszenty charged him with the duty of visiting Rajk in prison and persuading him to make a false confession. Kadar, in his capacity as Minister of the Interior, was one of the four persons who signed Rajk's order of execution. After Rajk's death he blamed him publicly. In June 1950 he resigned from his post of Minister of the Interior; the reason given was that the NWP had appointed him to important Party work. The Presidential Council of the People's Republic awarded him the gold medal of the order of Hungarian labor together with 5,000 forint for "his good work carried out in the interest of strengthening the Hungarian people's democracy".

Disgraced by Rakosi

At the Third Congress of the NWP, February-March 1951] Kadar delivered a speech on the admission of candidates for Party membership and on organizational work; he also criticized the departments of the Central Committee, mainly over the directing and control activities of the Party, the contact of the mass organizational departments and the Budapest and county Party committees. In the Party Politburo, with its 17 members and its secretariat of nine, he was placed fifth immediately after Rakosi, Gere, Farkas and Seval, the so-called muscovite "fourness".

In the Organizing Committee, Kadar was placed immediately below Rakosi. But his days of power were numbered. After the congress Rakosi carried out another purge against the background of the smoldering factional struggle between the muscovites and the home groups and this meant Kadar's downfall. In April 1951 he was arrested, and accused of espionage, treason and Titoism. Among the large number of arrested were also Hailai, Marosan, Donath and Losenyay. After cruel and humiliating tortures, in which Vladimir Farkas, son of Defense Minister Mihaly Farkas, and the deputy of Gabor Peter, played a part, Kadar appeared in court in December 1951 and was subsequently sent to the Vas prison, where he spent a long time in solitary confinement.

Rehabilitation

After Stalin's death, a "new course" was entered in with the June 1953 resolution of the Central Committee of the NWP. In July 1954, under the Premiership of Imre Nagy, Kadar was released

from prison but a total political rehabilitation did not follow; he was given Party work as a middle cadre, becoming first secretary of the Party organization of the NWP in the 11th district. At the end of October 1954, Kadar was elected a member of the National Council of the Patriotic People's Front which had just been formed. At the November 1954 council elections the Patriotic People's Front nominated him for the Budapest Thirteenth District. At the end of 1955 Kadar was appointed first secretary of the NWP Politburo for county Pest. In the increasingly strained political tension Kadar was becoming a more and more noticeable figure. In spring of 1956 he participated in discussions held by the NWP with Imre Nagy and his associates as their rehabilitation. Kadar insisted that Imre Nagy should exercise sharp self-criticism before his readmission to the Party. His joining the Central Committee was opposed by Rakosi. When Rakosi got wind of the news that Kadar had joined a group which demanded the calling to account of persons responsible in the Nagy camp, he played back at a Central Committee meeting in May 1956, a tape recording of a conversation between Kadar and Nagy which took place shortly before the latter's conviction.

Kadar's complete political rehabilitation took place in July 1956. On July 18, Rakosi resigned at Mikoyan's requests and Gero succeeded him as First Secretary in the Central Committee. Kadar was elected to the Central Committee, the Politburo and the Secretariat. Through his demand for Party political and organizational reforms and his condemnation of AVN atrocities, his popularity increased and his position became strengthened. In September 1956 Kadar was head of the NWP delegation participating in the Eighth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. At the beginning of October, together with Gero, Hidas and Szanto, Kadar conferred with Mikoyan and Suslov in Moscow. In mid-October he went to Belgrade as a member of the NWP delegation headed by Gero.

The Revolution

After the outbreak of the October 1956 revolution, Kadar replaced Gero on October 25 and became the First Secretary of the already disintegrated NWP. On October 26 a six-membered Party presidium headed by Kadar (including Apoc, Kiss, Munkacsy, Imre Nagy and Szanto) took over the direction of the Party. On October 30 Kadar announced over Radio Kossuth that each member of the NWP's Presidium agreed with the decisions of the national government. One of these decisions was the discontinuation of the one-party system. On November 1, Kadar conferred with Mikoyan and Suslov on the withdrawal of Soviet troops; on the same day he spoke over Free Radio Kossuth to the participants in the "glorious uprising", asserting

the glorious uprising of our people has delivered the nation from the Rakosi yoke, achieved the freedom of the people and the independence of the country, without which there is and can be no socialism. We can state openly that the spiritual and organizational leaders of this uprising and those who prepared it came from your ranks -- the Hungarian Communist writers, journalists, university students, the

young members of the Petofi Circle, thousands of workers, peasants, old fighters imprisoned because of false accusations, who fought in the first ranks against the Kadaristite tyranny and irresponsible policy. We are proud that in this armed uprising and its directing you stand your own ground honorably, filled with true patriotism and faith in socialism".

Kadar also referred in his speech to a counter-revolutionary danger and announced the formation of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. The members of the executive committee of the KSWP were Denath, Kadar, Kaposi, Losontay, Lakoss, Imre Nagy and Szanto.

Kadar also took a hand in government work; on October 30 he was a member of the cabinet of Imre Nagy. On November 3 he became Minister of State, and left Budapest on the same day. On November 4, during the second intervention, Wunnich announced the formation of the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant government; among its members were Apró, Kadar, Kosza, and Wunnich. Kadar went to Moscow and returned to Budapest, via Prague, on November 7. As the leader of the Party and president of the government, power was concentrated in his hands. The reappraisal of the "armed uprising", so recently glorified by him, began; it became a "counter-revolution", the achievements were gradually pushed into the background and a great purge reminiscent of the Russian "cleansings" started. The whole course was carried out with Kadar's full agreement.

Treat of the Kremlin

During the period following the October-November 1956 events Kadar has had the full trust of the Kremlin. In its 20 March 1957 issue, "Pravda" published Kadar's portrait and an extensive biography. According to "Pravda" Kadar is "a great personality of the Hungarian revolutionary worker and Communist movement" and "one of the most outstanding personalities among the Party and state leaders in Hungary". In April 1958 Khrushchev visited Hungary at the head of a seven-member Soviet Party and government delegation. Khrushchev singled out Kadar, whom "he hardly knew before" for especial praise and bolstered up his position against the Stalinists (Iskoni-tis). In the summers of both 1957 and 1958 the Hungarian leader spent his vacations in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev, in his interview with Adlai Stevenson in summer 1958, stated that he would be spending his summer vacation with Kadar. The "Great Soviet Encyclopedia" published a relatively detailed biography on Kadar in its Year Book for 1958.

Dominating the Party

Kadar's role in the Party is a dominating one. The leading organ of the newly organized Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, a temporary Central Committee with 23 members and a smaller temporary Executive Committee were both headed by Kadar. On 26 February 1957

the Party's governing bodies were extended. Kadar became the president of the Central Committee, member of the Executive Committee and head of the Secretariat. The strengthening and completion of the KMT's provisional governing bodies took place at the end of June 1957. Kadar became one of the 11 members of the Politburo and was First Secretary of the five members of the secretariat.

Except in a few cases, Kadar has headed all Party and government delegations to go abroad: Moscow (March 1957), Peking (September-October 1957), Moscow (November 1957, fourth conference of the Communist and Worker Parties), Bucharest, (February 1958), Khabarovsk (Kharagovsk) March 1958, for discussions with Tito, Moscow (May 1958, meeting of the Council for Mutual Aid and of the states belonging to the Warsaw treaty), Sofia (June 1958), East-Berlin (July 1958).

In October 1957 Kadar became the vice-president of the National Council of the Patriotic People's Front. He retained his position as head of the government till the end of January 1958 when the new "regrouping of power" took place. The government was reformed and Kadar, in the interest of "raising the level of the work of the Party, and of the social and mass organizations" resigned his Premiership but still remained a member of the Cabinet as Minister of State. He was decorated for his work as Premier with the medal "For the Worker-Peasant Power" by the President. At the November 1958 Parliamentary elections he was returned to Parliament on the Budapest list of the Patriotic People's Front.

Kadar's part in the execution of Imre Nagy and his associates is not cleared. But the fact remained that Kadar later discussed the case Imre Nagy when he had spoken of as his friend, his honored and esteemed fellow patriot in the days of the "glorious uprising" and whose decisions made on November 1 Kadar sanctioned and to whom he promised immunity after the people's uprising and whose return into political life he held to be possible. Later Kadar denied Imre Nagy, called him a person who "submerged himself into the morness of treason" and approved of his execution as a well deserved punishment.

Kadar is no muscovite; since he joined the Communist Party during its illegal period, he remained in Hungary up to the end. He has not the capabilities of any outstanding Communist leaders. He has a strong will, a hardy physique and his personality is unassuming. He is married and his wife is a decorated employee at the Government Information Office. He has a brother who emigrated to Canada between the two World Wars.

A Note on Sources

For general background on János Kádár the following were consulted: "Szabad Nép", 5 August 1948 and 3 March 1957; Year Book of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia 1950, p. 632; "Tovaris János Kádár", a biographical essay in "Tuzsók" 20 March 1957; Current Biographical Yearbook 1957, pp. 287-288; "Hungary's Split-Minded Premier" by György Falcsay-Norvath; "Sunday Times" (London) 24 March 1957; "Die Geschichte des János Kádár" by György Falcsay-Norvath; "Tar Munkai" March 1957; "János Kádár -- Partner und Befehlspfeifenger Moskauer" by György Pászai, "Quintessenz" 6 June 1957.

On particular aspects of Kádár's career and personality there is much information from a wide variety of sources. Details on Kádár's childhood, his youth, his membership in the Young Communist Workers' Association, (KIMSZ) and his first arrest were given in "Magyar Ifjúság" of 11 and 18 May 1958. "Nepszabadság" of 3 May 1958 also touches on his activities in KIMSZ. Kádár's mother is referred to in "Szabad Nép" of 23 August 1947. His brother (a Canadian citizen) who condemned his treachery in the revolution, was interviewed in "Ting" of 17 December 1956. Kádár as sportsman is referred to in "Szabad Nép" of 25 December 1946. For the tortures inflicted on him, see KFÉ Itén Nos. 1730/56, 1733/7-56, 1666/10-57. His relations with the Rajk family and the incriminating part he played in the Rajk case were covered by Falcsay-Norvath in "The Sunday Times" sp. of his public condemnation of Rajk was reported in "Szabad Nép" and "Nepszabadság" of 2 October 1949. "Magyar Kézilabda" of 24 June 1950 and 29 January 1958 contains references to his official decorations. The visit to Moscow shortly before the 1956 Revolution was reported by Radio Kézilabda on 6 October 1955. KFÉ Itén No. 791/58 contains interesting references to his services after the 1956 earth tremor, his narrow escape from becoming a Soviet prisoner-of-war, and his attacks on Vladimir Purkay in the spring of 1956. KFÉ Itén No. 174/III-3522 a/1-58 reports his part in the dissolution of the Tancsics Circle and the victory over the Neval-ints. Kádár's relations with Imre Nagy after the revolution are covered by a number of sources; his statement on the possibility of Nagy returning to public life was broadcast over Radio Kézilabda on 14 November 1956; his promise of immunity for Nagy appeared in "Nepszabadság" of 27 November 1956; his description of Nagy as "a person submerged in the morass of treason" in "Nepszabadság" of 12 June 1958. The Report of the Special Committee (of the IX General Assembly) on The Problem of Hungary, Chapter VII pp. 42-47 also contains references to his relations with Nagy, together with his part in the October-November events and the formation of the Worker-Peasant government.

On relations with Tito see "Tipi ad Suiati" November 1958. The question of Kadar's ghost writers is discussed in HFE Item No. 1-17477a/12-57.

A regime view on Kadar's career is contained in Istvan Fries: "The Hungarian Communist Party's Fight from October 1929 to August 1959" (Budapest 1955), and in "Documents Relating to the Study of the Hungarian Party's History" (Budapest 1955).

The following are the more important articles written by Kadar since November 1956: "First Steps" published in "Magyar Ifjúság" 11 May 1958 — this essay was one of a series entitled "We are the Young Guard"; an introduction to the new edition of "Társadalmi Szemle" in May 1957; "On the International Significance of the October Revolution" in "Társadalmi Szemle" October 1957; "Proletarian-Internationalism and the Soviet Union" in "Iparosok" 9 October 1957, also published in "Szabad Nép" 10 October 1957; "The Day of Liberation" in "Iparosok" 2 April 1958; "The Unity of the Working Class — the Guarantee of its Victory" in "Magyarok" 12 June 1958; "For Our Friendship" in "Ivestia" 6 August 1958.

A selection of Kadar's speeches entitled "Firm People's Power Independent Hungary" was published in 1958 by the Kossuth Publishing House.

End.