

1959

News Background

SOCIALISM PROCLAIMED; HUNGARIAN WOMAN DESCRIBES METHODS
USED IN COLLECTIVIZATION DRIVE

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BUDAPEST, March 25 (Lassen) -- An article in the Hungarian literary weekly "Elet az Irodalom" of March 13 presents a very revealing but obviously expurgated description of the methods used by the regime in its January-February collectivization campaign.

The authoress, Erzsébet Galgóczi, in explaining why the "socialization" of agriculture is "inevitable", and expressing apparent approval of the progress made in her native country, Győr, at the same time very frankly states her opinion "that not a single peasant would have joined the cooperative of his own free will -- without being won over or organized".

She then describes the methods employed to "win" the peasants over:

The feeling of the campaign was "in the air, like oxygen". Rumors spread. It was recognized that "sooner or later this village too would have to take its turn".

"In other places, I was told, council members were summoned to the Council Hall, taken to Győr to the Red Star Hotel where they were offered drinks. Upward down every council member signed the application form to join the cooperative". When they returned home "in high spirits", they were welcomed by a "cooperative village" since "in the course of the night the whole population joined the cooperative because they feared that the council members had been imprisoned".

Workers from the factories were sent to their home villages on unpaid leave and told not to come back to work until they could certify that their parents had joined a cooperative. "They were also told to use persuasion and that if their parents decided to remain outside another five years, the workers too should stay home for five years".

In one of the villages, it was "simply announced by the roll of a drum that from that day onward the village was a cooperative village and that everyone was to behave accordingly. Socialism was proclaimed".

Having described the methods in this unusually candid manner, the authoress then proceeds to make her points on the inevitability of "socialization".

The peasants finally agreed to collectivization because the collective "provides a basis and possibility for mechanization" and because it has become evident "and was proved that the socialist social

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order was to remain in Hungary"; in "that case agriculture was to be socialist. This is sure and everybody knows it".

It appears that the agitators' main argument was not that peasants would be better off in collectives but that collectivization was inevitable. Again, she manages another quite frank statement: "It is possible to explain to them why the cooperative is inevitable... peasants are sly. They can calculate. In county Győr, the peasants have worked it out: not that they will be better off in the cooperative from one day to the next but that it will not be worse in the first year than it was in the past." (See Hungarian Press Survey No. 524, March 25, for a full version of this article.)

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This article confirms other reports from Hungary on the methods used by the regime to achieve what it claims was a doubling of the collective sector, bringing the total arable land collectivized roughly to 24 per cent. The article, however, only hints at the degree of pressure employed.

What really happened at least in county Győr, however, should be clear to the Hungarian reader. When the author writes that council members were taken to the Red Star Hotel in Győr and that "toward dawn" they had all signed themselves into the collectives, it will be clear to the reader that the council members were evidently told they would not be allowed to return home until they had signed. The villagers who signed up because they "feared" the council members would be sent to prison were probably warned that this would, in fact, happen unless they signed up.

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