

The Hungarian Labour Movement and Bela Kun's regime
in their European Setting.

by

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Abbreviations.

- NMTVD. - Hungary, Dictatorship of the Proletariat, A Magyar Szocialista Munkaspárt Központi Bizottságának Parttörténeti Intézete, A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság, 1919 Március 21 - 1919 Augusztus 1, A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai, (Budapest: Szikra, 1959).
- DBFP. - Great Britain, Foreign Office, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1956), First Series.
- PUSFR. - Department of State, United States of America, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference 1919, (Washington, Government Printing Office).

Introduction.

It is not easy to anyone to write in an impartial manner on any topic involving one's own country. One is quite liable to fall victim to his own prejudices, pre-conceived opinion, likes and dislikes, and, -to use a Marxist concept, to be influenced by one's own social and economic background. This task, however, becomes even more difficult if we consider that the present Hungarian regime and its official organs abroad never are overanxious to publish the truth. Moreover the history of Hungary, and especially the history of the Hungarian Labour movement is, from time-to-time, re-written according to the psychological demands of the current political order. Consequently, it would not be difficult for an effort such as this to fail within a very short time after its conception.

However, the primary sources, as far as this paper is concerned, are mostly published. Fortunately, after the fall of the proletarian dictatorship, the counter-revolutionaries, whose purpose was to discredit Bela Kun and his regime, regarded as their primary duty the publishing of all the available documents concerning that experiment. This task was completed by the Government of People's Democracy after 1945 in order to commemorate the resurgence of the Revolution of 1919, documents revealing Hungarian-Soviet relations were published; and for self-justification all the previously unpublished documents were made accessible to

the scholars of the Communist "New Class".

The existing works on Hungary, the so called secondary sources, at first may seem to be confusing. While such a state cannot be justified, nevertheless, it arises from the extreme originality of the source-material. For the most controversial sources, we have the pro-Hungarian and anti-Hungarian writings, (including) the reliable and unreliable ones. These, of course, still lend themselves to further subdivisions: pro-Communist and anti-Communist, each claiming supreme authority concerning the evolution of the Hungarian Labour movement. To this, we must add the numerous journalistic efforts which, written under the duress of the moment and, of course, almost always with a pre-conceived motive in view, are invariably either highly red or snowy-white. However, instead of criticising, it might be a more positive and constructive policy to give credit where credit is due.

In this study the writer will follow the chronological approach. The advantage of this approach is that it shows the unbroken line of development of the Labour movement. At the same time, the writer is aware of its disadvantage, in that it can never be exhaustive, or coinciding events would lose their meaning. Therefore, there will always be points distorted, to a degree. The best one can do is to try to reduce the number of such points as much as possible. That is why the writer re-introduces at various places, already mentioned references, without which the whole study would look unconnected. Another inevitable result of

this approach is that the Western Labour movements will receive greater emphasis because they exerted greater **influence** on Hungary than the Eastern movements. Indeed, the writer has attempted to present in every period those motives which he thought were the most characteristic. This may also explain the relatively small place allotted to the early Russian Labour movement in connection with the Hungarian one. Otherwise, it is far more a general than a national movement.

Chapter I.

The Foundation.

The Hungarian Labour movement was influenced by the ideas of the trade unions, western Socialism, which, in turn, originated in the Industrial Revolution and in radical political ideas¹. The Communist revolution of 1919, in Hungary, was the result of the blending western social democracy coupled with that of Soviet Bolshevism.

The historians of modern European History generally describe Hungary as the weaker partner in the Austro-Hungarian Dual-Monarchy. As a country, basically similar to Poland and Russia, it was an agrarian society which showed the beginnings of industrial development. Even her agriculture, on which the country's economy depended as part of the Habsburgs' policy before 1867, was backward, thus making the country only a supplier of raw materials to Austria. While the few industrial centres somewhat resembled those of modern Western European counterparts, the agrarian society was as primitive as it was in Southern Europe, and just a little better than in the Balkans².

Hungary, having preserved its medieval institutions, was dominated by a great and powerful aristocracy which, in turn,

¹R.W. Seton-Watson, The Pattern of Communist Revolution, (London, 1953), p.1.

²A. Mod, 400 Ev Kuzdelem az Onallo Magyarorszagert, (400 Years of Struggle for an Independent Hungary), (Budapest, 1954), p. 299, (in Hungarian).

further hindered any effective development. During the Revolution of 1848, however, this class lost much of its power, thus signaling the beginning of the breakdown of the ancient social, economic and political order. Although a great portion of the aristocracy was impoverished but, at large, they remained politically powerful. To escape total disaster, Lengyel writes, this backward nation "...turned toward industrialization and related activities, the expansion of credit facilities, improved transportation and communication..."¹ Teleki, who himself belonged to this class explains that the Magyar ruling classes did not comprehend the importance of this situation. Instead² the nobles, who had always been interested in politics, became the administrators of the country. The leading positions in industry, commerce and banking were left to another strata of the Hungarian society, primarily to the Jews³. The situation was further complicated, again writes Lengyel, with the problem of nationalities. As soon

¹E. Lengyel, and J. Day, 1,000 Years of Hungary, (New York, 1958), p. 155.

²P. Count Teleki, The Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History, (New York, 1923), p. 89.

³P. Szende, Der Staatshaushalt und das Finanzsystem Oesterreichs und Ungarns, Handbuch der Finanzwissenschaft, (Tubingen, 1928), pp. 250-75.

as the nobles found themselves thrown back on their government jobs they could not very well allow the nationalities to occupy the places promised to them in the 1868 Nationality Act¹. To justify their intransigence, the Hungarian bureaucrats created the illusion that the non-Magyars were not dependable and were even dangerous. This was the theoretical foundation of the "Magyar Monroe Doctrine" with its "...admonition to the nationalities: Keep out and stay out of government..."²

The subservient role of Hungary, in comparison to Austria, hindered the development of industry and the development of an industrial working class. The Customs Union³, retained after the "Restoration of 1867"⁴, further delayed the development of a national industry. Although the government sought the rapid expansion of industry, the progress was slow, forcing many industrial workers and agricultural labourers to find employment abroad.

¹The Law of Nationalities was adopted by the Hungarian Parliament on December 1, 1868. In general, the provisions of this Law ensured that any Hungarian subject could use his native tongue in the course of his dealing with the State or with his fellow subjects.

²L. Mocsary, The Balance Sheet of the Dualistic System, (Budapest, 1902), p. 232. (in Hungarian).

³O. Jaszi, Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, (Chicago, 1929), p. 170.

⁴After the Austro-German War in which Austria was defeated the Emperor-King felt the necessity of a reconciliation with the Hungarian nation. The Compromise or Restoration of 1867 was an agreement between Austria and Hungary, in which the two countries formed a political union, commonly known Austro-Hungarian Empire, or Dual-Monarchy.

A substantial growth began towards the end of the sixties¹. The wide-spread introduction of agricultural machinery, which was being developed into an independent industry, coupled with a centrally organised transportation network, had created great demand for industrial manpower. This expanding industry, together with the increased number of industrial workers, in turn, laid the foundation of an independent working-class. And thus forming the "...last and least regarded ones of all social classes..."² explains Macartney, they automatically replaced the peasantry at the bottom of the social pyramid.

The great majority, of this newly created industrial manpower, were unskilled workers with a standard of living compared with that of the poorer stratas of peasantry. "Not only were they materially poor and exposed to exploitation by their prospective employers", writes Seton-Watson, "but they suffered from the mental and emotional bewilderment that resulted from the loss of one social environment -village life- which was not yet been compensated by the absorption in a new society..."³ This dependent status of the early Hungarian worker, after 1867, resembled the life of the British worker early in the 19th. century.

¹A. Daniel, "Towards the Economic Revolution of Hungary", Huszadik Szazad, (Budapest, 1909), No. 5, Vol.I, p. 225.

²C.A. Macartney, Hungary, (London, 1934), p. 252.

³The Pattern of Communist Revolution, p. 5.

Since this available domestic, industrial manpower was sufficient neither in quantity nor quality, Hungary opened up her labour-market to skilled foreign labour. To this basic group of displaced agricultural workers was added a new element -skilled imported labour. Some of these were foreigners attracted by good wages and choice positions, others were expatriots who had emigrated to Western countries in search of work, and returned to the homeland with their newly acquired technical skills.

Although the idea of organising the workers into a union had emerged well before 1867, it proved impossible to advance it. For Austria, during the Reign of Absolutism², along with stamping out national liberty, also stamped out social liberty as well. The organisation of a workers' union, thus, had to wait till 1867, when the constitutional rights of Hungary and of her subjects were reinstated. The transitional period and its results, though anticipated, was swift and strongly influenced by the previous experiences of other European countries.

The Hungarian Labour movement had the same body of doctrine as the Western labour unions - Socialism, more or less derived from Marx. But in practice, the differences, in the conditions outlined above, resulted in a mixture of the different European movements. The North, especially England, contributed

¹ As the aftermath of the unsuccessful Revolution of 1848-49 the period of 1849-67 is called the "Reign of Terror" or the "Reign of Habsburg Absolutism".

the idea of workers leadership. There, the Labour leaders were themselves usually workers and the enemy forces were the capitalists and their various supporters. The field, in which the struggle was fought, was parliamentarism for general suffrage and trade union rights. The British workers' hard fight for these social, political and economic advancements, and their success were the inspirations of the Hungarian Labour movement.

The East, particularly Russia, where the leaders were usually "professionals" also exerted some effect on the revolutionary elements of the Hungarian Labour movement. This however did not amount to anything substantial because on one hand the Russian Labour movement itself was weak, and on the other hand there was no class similar in Hungary. "...the class of professional revolutionists never existed in Hungary...", noted an historian of the Hungarian Communist Party.¹

France gave indirect influence to the forces that were shaping the early Hungarian Labour movement. It was not the present but the past, the Great Revolution², the Revolution of 1848, and

¹MMTVD., Vol. I, p. 291.

²F. Funck-Brentano, Die Bastille in der Legende und nach historischen Dokumenten, (Breslau, 1899).

the experiences of the Paris Commune,¹ that made the Hungarian workers realize their might, that the force of the proletariat is capable of overthrowing the whole structure of the existing social order, all existing hierarchies, all existing values, and creating either an anarchy or a civilization entirely of their own.²

While Great Britain set the "ideal", Germany rendered the practical examples to the movement. The German movement was larger, more advanced, and better organized than that of the Hungarian. It was, on the whole, a workers group led by workers, but one in which the intellectuals played an important role, and for that they were well respected. Since both countries suffered under extreme absolutism, their social institutions and their aims were rather similar. However, the German movement had brilliant theoreticians and the Hungarians lacked them. It was, therefore, logical that the hurt, irritated, and persecuted German intellectuals such as Karl Marx, Ferdinand Lassalle, Edward Bernstein, Karl Kautsky spoke not only for Germany and for the German workers but for Hungary as well.

¹S. Eckhardt, A Francia Forradalom Eszmei Magyarországon, Budapest, 1924.

²E. Yaroslavsky, "Marx and Lenin in the Proletarian Revolution", The Communist International, (London, 1929) Vol. VI, Nos. 9-10, pp. 313-15.

These controversial theories and practices of the European movement gave an excellent but also dangerous example for the shaping of an Hungarian one. Thus, the private interests of rivalry and the ideological differences, soon turned out to be irreconcilable. They divided the new class into those who pursued bourgeois aims and those who strictly wanted to create a Western type of political group.

The first group, who called itself the "Budapest Workers Association" and was to follow Schultze-Delitsch¹, bears minor importance. The idea, behind this faction, was to develop it into the sphere of Capitalism. They aimed to advance all their members, applying the principles of mutual economic aid and assistance, from apprenticeship to independent craftsman. On their side, besides workers and petty bourgeois, were represented manufacturers, white collar workers and intellectuals. Within this Association, the gap between the various groups inevitably grew intolerable and finally reduced it to a mere "sick-aid" agency. Therefore, this faction, weak from its foundation, soon failed.

The other faction showed more promise for the future. Its nucleus were the workers who came from Western Europe, who were already acquainted with labour-theories. This faction stood on a more advanced level than that of the Budapest Association,

¹R., Hunter, Socialists at Work, (New York, 1908), p. 335.

and, because it had a clearer vision of the future from its beginning, it was able to advocate the unification of all wage earners.

Under the direct influence of the early unions, as early as 1861, says Macartney, and with the intention of taking a stand for all, they, therefore, called their faction the "General Workman's Association".¹ Its Charter (1869) is the turning point in the history of the early Hungarian Labour movement, for 1869 is the date when the Hungarian workers, with the aid of the Germans, came into contact with the First International.

Ferdinand Lassalle², whom Liebknecht called "the man in whom the modern organized German Labour movement had its origin"³, gave the theoretical foundation of the Hungarian Labour movement. His theory of Democracy, expressed in a letter called "Macht und Recht", states that in "...Democracy alone dwells right and in Democracy alone will might be found..."⁴ This program, aimed at

¹Macartney, Hungary, p. 259.

²A.N. Holcombe, "The Life and Work of Ferdinand Lassalle", The German Classics, (New York, 1914), Vol. X, pp. 382-395.

³Social Demokratische Partei-Tag, Protokoll, (Breslau, 1895), p. 66, cited in S.P. Orth, Socialism and Democracy in Europe, (New York, 1913), p. 148.

⁴Lassalle expressed his social ideas in an address April 12, 1862 which later was published under the title "The Workingmen's Programme". It was followed with an "Open Letter to the Committee for the Calling of a General Convention of German Workingmen at Leipzig", dated March 1, 1863. This letter was published under the title "Macht und Recht" in Zurich, 1863.

those who did not have any right at all, found warm and eager response. Thus the Lassallian ideas, the economics of State subsidized co-operatives, but especially his plan of a workingmen's party fighting for universal democratic rights, became the core on which the young Hungarian Labour movement launched a political struggle which only ended with the Revolution of 1918.

As long as the movement was orienting itself on Western examples, centering around material interests, wages, working hours and the best organization of economic life at large, the Authorities were more than sympathetic to the movement. This amiable relationship abruptly came to a halt as soon as the movement, under the influence of Lassalle, felt itself strong enough to challenge the parliamentary system, that is the Franchise right. This newly changed and hostile attitude of the Government was due to the political structure of Hungary, which was something between French and English parliamentarism and Russian autocracy. The country, being an equal member of the Dual-Monarch, as far as public law was concerned¹, chose its own parliamentary representatives. In Austria the parliament was elected by universal suffrage; in

¹Teleki in his "Evolution of Hungary and its place in European History" gives a detailed account concerning the political relationship between the two countries. He says, that although both countries were equal, in reality Hungary's share was purely nominal, for no time did the number of Hungarians in the "common services" exceed 33 per cent, in fact, this ratio was seldom reached.

Hungary it was restricted to an extremely unrepresentative franchise. The Electoral Law of 1874, which was "...one of the most curious perversions of Franchise which it is possible to imagine..."¹ limited the right of ballot to 6 per cent of the population in such way that only Hungarian property owners were included, completely outleaving industrial workers, who were considered "dangerous".

The Government's stubborn opposition to the movement's demands for universal suffrage lies deeper than in not trusting this rising and basically dissatisfied class. It was rooted in the problem of nation minorities. The Western European states were primarily populated by homogeneous racial groups, and though they were constantly engaged in national conflicts, their nature was entirely different. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy, as the Russian Empire, was a multi-national state, with privileges enjoyed by Austrians and Hungarians. The problem, furthermore, was complicated by the differences in cultural levels. While Austria was more advanced than Hungary, the Hungarians, in turn, were more developed than the Slovak, Croat, Ruthene and Roumanian minorities, but they had one thing in common, all of them sought national independence.

¹C.J.C. Street, Hungary and Democracy, (London, 1923), p. 17.

²Lengyel, 1,000 Years of Hungary, p. 162.

The minor nationalities, under direct control of Hungary, were naturally, barred from parliamentary representation. The Hungarian prime ministers were the personal choice of the Emperor, thus reducing the supposedly independent Government to being the mouth-piece of the Court of Vienna. Under these circumstances it was obvious that a restricted and selected electoral body was needed to guard the hegemony of Austria at the top of the multi-state hierarchy. The parliamentary representation of a class, which basically was anti-monarchist in its struggle for power, would have used the issue of national independence, backed up by the dissatisfied nationalities. This chance no government or ruler could be allowed to take. Its struggle was the theme of the Hungarian Social Democratic movement, as the demand for universal franchise-reform coupled with the demands of national minorities and their distrust in Hungarian politics eventually led to the Communist Revolution of 1919.

In the meantime the movement rapidly expanded. At the time of the French Commune there was an organized Social Democratic movement in Hungary. Its initial success, apart from the close connection with the German movement, was partly due to the close relationship with the Central Committee of the First International¹.

¹Mod, 400 Ev..., p. 326.

Already in 1868, the General Workman's Association established contact with the Congress of Brussels, and under its directives was able to shape its programme. Through personal connections the Hungarian movement was well aware of the Parisian events. The masses of the proletariat were sympathetic but, at the same time, observed those events with horror. While Marx greeted the Revolution of 1871 with joy and regarded it as the advent of a revolutionary current in Europe, the public reaction of Hungary completely failed his anticipations. And so its defeat did not really distress the masses. There were sympathy demonstrations with scattered strikes over the country but, in general, they had neither ideological nor practical connections with that of the Commune.

This rapidly expanding Hungarian Labour movement, drawing its operating principles from the German Social Democratic Labour Party, took special European aspects into consideration. The first part of the programme, that of stimulating the political and class consciousness of the workers and of building political parties, was successful in the major European countries before the end of the 19th. century. The trade unions, which had already been organized, now began to accept Marxist theory and to enter the field of politics. Socialist and Social Democratic Parties were formed in Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Russia. The British Labour Party, although repudiating the philosophy of Marxism, represented a similar combination of forces.

The attitudes which these working parties began to develop were, however, disconcerting from a Marxist viewpoint. Parkes quite rightly explains that in Russia, which was an autocratic State, the revolutionary ideas were supported. But in Western Europe, while there was still support for revolutionary principles, the trend was shifting toward legal and parliamentary reforms with considerable success. It was believed, furthermore, that a bourgeois-democratic State was not merely an instrument of capitalistic domination, but a system under which it was possible for the workers to win reforms. Although the working-classes continued to suffer from unemployment and low wages, nevertheless, their conditions, through trade union pressure on the governments, coupled with social legislation enacted by the State, were an improvement compared to earlier conditions. The result, and this is what the orthodox Marxists could not understand, was a steady weakening in the tendency towards revolution.¹

These were the influences of the West on the Hungarian Labour movement. Although it was unanimous desire of both factions, of the Budapest Workers Association as well as of the General Workman's Association, to raise class-consciousness and to organize a Social Democratic Party, they differed totally on the question of leadership and of ultimate aims. The majority of the workers sought, upon the example of the "Western brothers", economic and political

¹Parkes, Marxism, an autopsy, (Boston, 1939), p. 11-2.

reforms. They demanded strong parliamentary institutions, governed by the people, better living, equal social and political acceptance, and non-Communist revolution.

The second faction, which we have already mentioned, was a utopist one. They believed, including the above mentioned reforms, that in due time every apprentice will be a small shop-keeper and thus will be promoted into the sphere of the middle class.

The third faction were the orthodox Marxists, who represented the "fanatical Left-wing". These men did not accept anything but the principles of revolution.

Despite the confusion created by these controversial factions, the period from the First to the Second International is also the period of the failure of the international Communism to get foothold in the Hungarian Social Democratic Labour movement. The First International ended with the Paris Commune. However, before its termination Marx dispatched one of the executives from the Central Committee to revive the movement of international Communism in Central Europe, The man he had chosen was a native of Hungary, Leo Frankel.¹ He belonged to the Left-Wing of the

¹Leo Frankel was a prominent figure of the early Hungarian Labour movement. In his early youth travelled all over Europe and became acquainted with Western Socialism. In 1860 he fought in Germany with Bebel. Later met Marx in London and became his disciple. During the French Revolution of 1871 he was elected to be Minister of Labour. He was in constant connection with Marx who gave him instructions. After the defeat of the Revolution he escaped to London where became Austria-Hungary's correspondent for the International and thus became a member of the Central Committee. M. Aranyossi, Fränkel, Leo, (Budapest, 1952).

Paris Commune¹ and was regarded by the partisans of international Communism as "...one who understood the true meaning of the Commune".² Frankel arrived in Budapest with full understanding of the International and, in turn, was well received. The movement, which stood on the principles of Western Socialism as early as 1869 was in a complete chaos. Weak and opportunist leaders, pursuing their private interests, weakened the once vigorous General Workman's Association into a mere pipeline of the Government. Against disorder and internal fight, Frankel represented order and unity of the Western movements, that is, the International. Against opportunist self-interests, he represented a complete self-denial for the "ideal". The "...remote and once detached French Revolution at once became flesh and blood..." wrote a contemporary Communist writer.³

The yet disinterested masses saw those events in a new light, for he was ready to fight for them as he had fought for the French proletariat. But Frankel being a faithful disciple of Marx intended more than he actually said. For he, being a professional revolutionist, adopted an impersonal view of the national characteristics of the Hungarian movement. He forced Tanács, his

¹K. Marx and F. Engels, Correspondence, 1846-1895 (Selection), (London, 1934), p. 312.

²Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Ent'siklopediia, (Moscow, 1936) Vol. LVIII, p. 385.

³MMTVD., *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 351.

predecessor, out of the movement and openly attacked Kulfoldy and Csernyi, leaders of the Right-wing, as agents of the Government. He aimed to isolate the Left, the "true Socialists", from the "fellow travellers", and eventually put under leftist control the forming independent Social Democratic Party. While in London, he had been in contact with Farkas, first correspondent to the International. With him he tried to organize the most radical elements into an inner circle and the years that follow are the history of that internal struggle of the movement.¹

This period is also the time of the tremendous growth of the Hungarian industry. The movement kept the pace and, besides increasing its membership, was able to awaken a certain class-consciousness in the workers. Hitherto, the idea of forming an independent party was only the desire of a few but, from now on, it was requested from all stratas of the Association. Against such pressure Frankel could not hold back and, in 1879, was forced to consent to the unification of the two associations. The fact that he was forced to give up the isolation of his group was the first defeat to his tactics and, to retain control, he adopted the slogan of the need of an independent party. He suffered his second defeat when the First Congress of the Hungarian General Worker's Party, officially adopted as standard policy Lassallian ideas against Marx's

¹A. Mod, 400 év..., p. 358.

Gotha Programme¹. In spite of the demand of his group, the Party rejected the idea of Communist revolution and instead embarked upon a peaceful struggle for equal social rights. With this outspoken rightist victory in the foundation, and furthermore, the policy of the new Party, Frankel's popularity began to fade away. He, being a Marxist, could not comprehend the peculiar social, political and economic situation of Hungary. What he gained in fighting for better economic standards he lost in his insistence for revolution. However, he did not accept this change in ideas. Instead he tried to transfer the blame to those who were elected as the new leaders. He continuously challenged Csernyi, Ihrlinger to step aside, giving him the power even after it was clear that he should leave. After a Court-ordeal, having been charged with high treason², his collaborators forced him to resign and leave, in order to save the remaining leftist faction.

The root of failure is to be found in the idea Frankel represented and the time he had chosen. The storm of revolutions had passed over Europe³. Its slogans were replaced with the slogans of peace. He was popular while the revolutionary fever lasted and

¹K. Kautsky, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, (Manchester, 1919), p. 42.

²In 1881 Frankel was charged with high treason on the ground of organizing muting in the ranks of the Army and of among the working-classes against the Government. (Aranyossi, Frankel Leo, p. 182)

³MMTVD., *ibid.*, Vol. I., pp.422-3.

while the economic conditions of Hungary more or less gave justification to Marx's theory of class antagonism and of the pauperisation of the working-classes. But the evolution of the Hungarian Labour movement ran directly opposite to those views. While the leaders of the various factions soon realised that by depending only on their own power they gained less and less, Frankel sought isolation. He was bound to fail, for he represented an alien and fallacious theory to a class which had no revolutionary ideas whatsoever against the more and more popular and organized Social Democracy.

Ever since the Great French Revolution, the idea of revolution had always been a practical issue inside the Labour movement. With Bebel's death the German Social Democratic Party lost one of its most able leaders. The intellectual leadership then shifted toward the less developed Social Democratic Party of Austria, and toward France. From the Communist point of view Bela Kun argues that the parties of the Second International, at the time when Germany reached the peak of Capitalist development, in theory and practice, became opportunist and reformist.¹ Indeed, on the one hand the unions and parliamentary parties carried out large scale activities on a peaceful basis; on the other hand, the orators of the parties used strong language against the political regime giving the Continental Labour movement a misleading

¹Bela Kun, "The Communist Party of the Soviet and the Communist International", The Communist International, (London, 1929), Nos. 9-10, Vol. VI., p. 327.

revolutionary flavour. Against this paradoxical notion, Bernstein and Adler spoke their views but Jaurès expressed it more definitively when he challenged the Labour movement "...to make words agree with facts, to appear as it was".¹ According to his opinion the movement should disregard the idea of a proletarian revolution and instead, concentrate on the gradual directing of society towards democracy and socialism. This theory was appealing to the Right-wing of the Hungarian Labour movement because it was peaceful, relatively easy and, therefore, safe in its struggle for recognition. To declare loyalty to the Crown, it was assumed, that the workers were improving their conditions within the framework of the existing society, and that the recognition of the Class parliamentary rights were under way. Thus the Right urged the Left-wing for collaboration in an united front.

The founding of the General Worker's Party upon the pattern of Western Trade Unionism clearly indicated that Hungary once again sided with Western Socialism. With Frankel's leave the connection between the movement and the Left-wing of the International completely broke down. The Left dissolved itself into the new Party and soon, without leadership, ceased to be important. The new Party totally rejected the idea of revolution and, for the sake of an unhampered Social Democratic development, was ready to co-operate with the government.² Even the Second International,

¹Franz Borkenau, The Communist International, (London, 1938), p. 30.

²MMTVD., *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 565.

the Congress of Paris in 1889, noted that Hungary had totally slipped away from Marxism.¹ The leader and representative, Ihrlinger, confirmed these views. He stated that the task of the Hungarian movement was to co-operate with the government which is the security of national welfare. This policy was in line with that of the new International. "...Paying lip service to Marxist orthodoxy..."² the Second International, in practice, professed a new version of Marxism. Accordingly, this International was, also, a loose federation. And in fear of a split, which was considered to be the worst evil, it paid too much importance to formal unity. Although the Hungarian movement belonged to the western sphere, its connection with it was rugged. In order to live up to its principles and to draw the Hungarian movement closer to the West, the International sent P. Engelmann, one of the leading representatives of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, to Hungary to strengthen that movement. There was another related reason: the movement had swung too much towards the bourgeois parties and, although the Left-wing was wiped out, it was still strong enough to file its complaints and to request supervision from the International.³

The revived Hungarian Labour movement meant advancement

¹Ibid., p. 564.

²Seton-Watson, The Pattern of Communist Revolution, p. 16.

³A. Mod, 400 Ev...., p. 377.

from that of the revolutionary era. However, it was not towards Marxism. The Second International was anti-Marxist, led politically by the German Social Democratic Party, and theoretically by Kautsky. Kautsky and his followers influenced the International to subordinate revolution to the economic requests of the growing trade unions, and to fight for equality of rights within the bourgeois democracies.¹ While Kautsky, in theory, accepted the Marxist's notion of the proletarian class struggle, in practice, he abandoned the idea of revolution. Engelmann could not, under such circumstances, bring anything new into the Hungarian movement as his ideas had been practiced before, but what he did was to carve these ideas into the workers' consciousness, promoting them to be part of the International. This led the Party a step forward, and he was able to charter it as the Hungarian Social Democratic Labour Party. In complete agreement with the International, the Party Congress of 1880 accepted Lassalle's economic and political ideas, again rejecting international Communism.²

The characteristic of the end of the 19th. century was that of a slow evolution. The 20th. century, on the other hand, announced itself as one of revolutionary change, because, as Macartney believes, "...savage repressive measures were taken by the

¹F. Borkenau, European Communism, (London, 1953), p. 29.

²MMTVD., *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 411.

Government when the agitation spread to the provinces."¹ During the period between 1890 and 1905 the Hungarian working-class increased in number, and, as the result of their peaceful struggle for economic betterment, they became relatively prosperous.² In the meantime, in 1903, the Social Democratic Party was reorganized with new statutes and a new programme which enabled it to match the Government's intentionally elastic laws on Labour associations, meetings, and strike movements. Since the movement stood on Lasalle's and Bernstein's doctrines, the 1905 Russian revolutionary attempt was observed by some emotionally, but generally, the feeling was of indifference. There were numerous strikes and sympathy demonstrations. But, as during the French Commune, they were aimed to extract further economic privileges but not to overthrow the Government.

The Hungarian Labour Party shared the belief of Western Socialism that no social revolution was possible in the West, therefore, it concluded, Hungary should not follow the Russian example. The Party felt itself weak against the Government, and it felt still weaker before the people. Revolution being incompatible with their policy of peaceful evolution, they opposed any attempt for an open fight and blocked all Leftist elements who wanted to stir up public sympathy. The strikes and sympathy demonstrations were thus

¹Macartney, Hungary, p. 260.

²Mod, 400 Ev..., p. 413.

turned into demonstrations for universal suffrage and social welfare. The Communist idea of a revolutionary working-class movement was still a fallacy. In fact, it never came into being for the Hungarian Revolution of 1919 was superimposed as it did not have any deep roots in the history of the movement.

The period between the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the First World War is one of unhampered Social Democratic development. In the theme of peaceful co-existence, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, as a member of the International Workingmen's Association,¹ engaged itself in political struggles for economic improvements and for parliamentary representation. However, to achieve these aims, the Party was forced to make compromises with the Authorities. This is the reason why, as Macartney rightly points out, the Social Democrats supported the conservative cabinet of Baron Fejervary, who ruled in defiance of the historic parties of 48's and 67's,² in the hope of a promise of franchise reform.³ But we get the final answer from Hunter, who writes:

"...again nothing was done...when the elections of 1906 took place not a single candidate could be found...however, it was soon apparent that the people had again been betrayed..."⁴

¹Orth, Socialism and Democracy in Europe, p. 71.

²The Independence Party of 1848 and the Liberal Party of 1867.

³Macartney, Hungary, p. 260.

⁴Hunter, Socialists at Work, p. 336.

Another characteristic of this peaceful development was the centrally organized strike-movements. A great number of these took place with the common aim of improving the economic standards of the masses.

Marx had prophesized the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few capitalists, accompanied by increasing misery of the masses. This prophecy however had not materialized in Hungary. Before the First World War the standard of living of the workers relatively improved, and there was hope of further improvements. Moreover, the middle class and the peasantry also remained numerous, influential and prosperous. Under these circumstances, the Left-wing interference could not raise more than a negligible opposition to the programme of the Social Democratic Party.

Along with these tactics, the Party expelled Alpar, who was leader of the extreme Left-wing. Although he accepted Marxist principles he was not a revolutionist. As the leader of the Left-wing, more by circumstances rather than by his beliefs, he could not accept the ideological leadership of the Second International nor could he fully adopt the Bolshevism of Lenin. To save the "movement from reformism" of the West, Alpar made an attempt to introduce Syndicalism into the Hungarian movement.

The period before the First World War was also the period of the revival of the Syndicalist movement. It is difficult

to classify Syndicalism writes Orth, because:

"...it refuses to be called Anarchism, repudiates the leadership of Socialism, and scorns to be merely trade unionism..."¹

This nevertheless was just what Alparý wanted. Upon these doctrines he feverishly opposed any compromise and collaboration with the Government and bourgeois parties and, thus developed inevitable conflict with both the Social Democrats and the Authorities. His accusation of trade unionist reformism against the Social Democratic Party and its leader, Garami, with betrayal of the cause, resulted in his expulsion from that Party. The close relationship with the Second International is shown in the latter's verdict sanctioning Alparý's expulsion.²

The Alparý incident clearly indicates the reformism of the Hungarian Labour movement before the First World War. His faction had to be eliminated because the voice he raised against the opportunist and revisionist party policy was becoming uncomfortable to the Government and its associated Social Democratic Party leaders. However the expulsion of Alparý was a loss as the movement had no resources to replace him. It could not draw its leaders from the bourgeoisie which would have been logical as it was the case in Russia. Therefore it remained weak, and was an easy prey

¹Socialism and Democracy in Europe, p. 107.

²Mod, 400 Ev...., p. 448.

to the Government. Since its beginning the movement had always depended on outside influence. The example of the West was always copied conspicuously. When it was revolutionary so was Hungary and when the Western movements were reformist so were the Hungarian. The difference was that the Hungarian movement was more extreme, in either direction than that of Western.

The movement before the War, unable to carve out its own independence, depended on the mercy of the Government. The Social Democratic Party was, according to its leaders, "...fighting an enormous battle..." with the Government for general franchise reform, that is, for the right of parliamentary representation. This "fight", however, was a peaceful one. The Government had not any real objection against the Party's co-operation with the International. In fact, the Government did everything to enhance the movement's co-operation with the West. This was the movement's tragedy. The "fight" was not really a fight as the Authorities had it under control. Before the War, the Social Democratic Party's function was to keep the masses under control. In turn, the Government promised them universal Franchise and parliamentary representation.

Had the Hungarian Social Democratic movement any other choice? The answer is "No". The solution should have come from the East but the Hungarians were culturally alienated from it. Neither the West nor the East understood each other and the

Hungarian movement was trapped between them. Lenin could have been the leader but he did not perceive the basic characteristics of the western movements¹. His theory of a narrow authoritarian leadership was incompatible with the vast democratic veto of the masses. In the end he was rejected, and the European movement became dominated by the ideas of Kautsky and Bernstein who could not supply the final answer either, but at least their ideas were acceptable.

Under these conditions the outbreak of the First World War, writes Borkenau, did not take the Socialists by surprise.

"...the congresses of the Second International had for several years discussed the possibility of a war, the fight against its danger, and the measures to be taken in case a war should come despite the opposition of Labour..."²

When war came the collapse was at its worst in Germany. Most of the German Socialists, with the exception of Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Hasse, Ledebour, Bernstein, and a few others, supported militarism. They shared the responsibility not only for the declaration of war but also for its prolongation as well.³

¹Borkenau, European Communism, p. 51.

²Borkenau, Communist International, p. 57.

³H. Eberlein, "The Foundation of the Comintern and the Spartakus Bund", The Communist International, (London, 1929), Nos. 9-10, Vol. VI, p. 439.

The German example was not without effect on the Austrian and Hungarian Socialists, who had always looked to the German Labour Party for guidance and copied its tactics conspicuously. Thus they too regarded war as an opportunity to overthrow the bourgeoisie. However, it was only a verbalized idea to the Westerners, and it meant even less to the Hungarians. Since the Hungarian Labour movement was reformist and its leaders opportunist, the Social Democratic Party, at the outbreak of the War, not only rejected the opportunity of a political take over but even gave up its fight for "franchise-reforms".¹

When war finally broke out all these resolutions were forgotten. For, as Street aptly expresses it, "...the clamour for war in July 1914 was nowhere louder than in Hungary..."² It was one thing to vote for revolution but it was another thing to carry it through. A possible opposition did not worry the Government because the Social Democrats were not against, but for the war. The only reason the Party did not vote for the War Credits, writes Garami, was because "...we had no parliamentary representation."³

The outbreak of the War meant the breakdown of the

¹Mod, 400 Ev..., p. 453-4.

²Street, Hungary and Democracy, p. 9.

³Ernest Garami, "The International and the War", Socialism (Budapest, 1914-15), pp. 447-48.

traditional Social Democratic policy for the "national" feeling proved to be stronger than that of "international". This wave of patriotism ruled almost till the end of the War and this feeling was shared by all the belligerent countries. However, the Hungarian situation differed from the Western in the more unique enthusiasm of its members and leaders. The leaders never turned against the Government and the members never failed to trust the leaders. Enthusiasm, naturally, declined but their patriotic loyalty or, in the language of the revolutionists "betrayal of Socialism and Revolution" remained until the end. It further proved that a revolutionary proletariat never existed in Hungary.

To complete the picture of Social Democratic "patriotism" in connection with the War, there were less important factors. The Party, in its struggle for the betterment of social and economic standards, was forced into an unspoken and practical compromise with the Government. In this pact, the trade unions were free to organize the masses in the major industrial centres providing they kept out of revolutionary activities. As a result, the few strong trade unions were able to secure the highest wages in the country for their urban proletarian members. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that these "privileged" workers were bribed by the bourgeoisie, itself weak economically and politically. Nor had the theory of "workers' aristocracy" anything

to do with these relatively high wages. They were already earning the highest wages, and they intended that this practice continue in the future. Moreover, they had a basically loyal and patriotic nature which logically supported the government-in-power, who was defending their country and their privileged position.

Another important argument for the policy of national union, in those days, was the question of an underground movement. To hinder military operations would have brought about government actions against their movement, and for that the Social Democrats were unprepared. The only action they took was to fight for the day-to-day interests of the workers. Also, the national patriotism was so high that even the idea of underground preparations for revolution would have meant the betrayal of nationalism. While western movements were torn between the voluntary choice of active or passive support of the War, eventually choosing the active one, this was never a question for the Hungarian movement.

The reformism of the movement and loyalty to its leaders were an odd combination. This loyalty, practised by the masses, was the result of the relative improvements the Social Democratic Party obtained for its members through decades of struggles. If the Party was destroyed, either by the police or by the defeat of their country, these gains would have been either seriously menaced or completely lost. Thus men's interests, joined with their

loyalties, produced their obvious course of action. The only serious alternative would have been Lenin's theory of working for the defeat of one's country. This, however, could only have been done, writes Borkenau, had Marx's theory been true that "...the workers have no Fatherland..."¹ The theory had worked in Russia, where the conditions were so intolerable that a national defeat was preferred to the existing political regime, but certainly it was incompatible with western Socialism. And against all Communist accusation, it certainly did not work in Hungary.

The vote of the Social Democrats to help and support the government was not incompatible with their earnest desire to make peace at the first opportunity. The Party did not claim theoretical independence neither from the Western movements nor from its own Government. The peace offer of the Central Powers on December, 1916 and President Wilson's note of December 18th "...crossed and arose out of the same idea...", writes Burian, the Foreign Minister of the Dual Monarchy. Nevertheless, he believes that Austria-Hungary's peace offer "...neither restrained the President from his peace move nor influenced it..."² These efforts, being inspired by humanity and political goodwill, however, turned

¹Borkenau, European Communism, p.-59-60.

²Count S. Burian, Austria in Dissolution, (London, 1925), p. 206.

out to be unsuccessful. The Social Democratic Party remained faithful to the Government, and sought coalition with the Opposition only when even the bourgeois parties, upon Karolyi's suggestion, formed a "Franchise Coalition".¹

Karolyi believes that the failure of the peace negotiations and the general weariness of the masses for War were the immediate causes of the shift to the Left in the Social Democratic Party. To counter-balance this shift and, furthermore, in order to maintain control over the masses, the Party returned to its pre-war tactics of fighting for parliamentary representation. The country was half beaten, the masses were in poverty under forced labour but, once again, they believed their leaders and their government. This was a crucial point, and the Government failed it. The Government could have reduced, or even avoided the catastrophe of 1919 had justice been given to the century demand for universal political rights. The social structure of Hungary was also in decay. The Government was corrupt and absolutistic. The ruling classes, while the masses were starving, were still living in the glory of the past, the pomp of the royal court. They failed to see the poverty and the weaknesses of the Fatherland. With immediate and effective reforms, the Government could have won the support of the bypassed-masses, including the nationalities, but apart from vague promises

¹M. Count Karolyi, Fighting the World, (New York, 1925), p. 159.

to their demands nothing was done in this direction. The parliamentary debates did not console the overworked and famished proletariat. They demonstrated their discontent by engaging in strikes and demonstrations which eventually pushed the country into Communist revolution. While during the year 1917 these movements were negligible, the beginning of the year 1918 found Hungary in the midst of a very serious crisis.¹ The long drawn out War had exhausted the resources of the country, and the discontent, caused by economic evils and manifold privations, was assuming ever wide proportions.

Meanwhile important events were taking place in the world which, apart from having any immediate influence on Hungary, were tremendously significant for the future fortunes of the country. At the end of 1917 Bolshevism had won Russia, and the rule of the Soviet had been established. No one at that time had any clear idea what Bolshevism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat meant, for Russia was sealed off from the rest of the world. The little information that reached the West, however, was enough to excite the already heated imagination of the masses. Although there was not any class in Hungary, in which the theories of the Soviet could take permanent root, nevertheless, many saw in the

¹C.A., Gulick, Austria, from Habsburg to Hitler, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1948), p. 41.

victory of Bolshevism an event which might influence the course of war in their favour and bring them nearer to peace, order, and the end of all pain.

The first serious attempt to loosen the social structure, and undermine the forces of the State, was a general strike on January 18, 1918, which broke out first in Vienna and then in Budapest.¹ The strike was an economic one but it was inspired by political motives, as it was admitted by the Nepszava, the official organ of the Social Democratic Party. Although it collapsed, a decay started from which the government could not recover.

After this first major strike disturbances rapidly followed one another. It was at this time that a conspiracy was discovered which aimed at undermining the discipline of the Army. The participants were members of the "Galilei Society"² which stood on the principle of anti-militarism and Syndicalism. They set up a secret printing press, smuggled pamphlets into the military barracks and called on the soldiers to disobey orders. From this Society grew a new one, the "Society of the Twenty-year-olds" which later constituted the intelligentsia of the Communist revolution of Bela Kun.³

¹It meant to be a solidarity strike against the unjust demands made by the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk.

²The "Galilei Society" was a student organization with socialistic tendencies in which the Jewish element played an increasingly predominant role.

³O. Jazzi, Magyarians Schuld, Ungarns Suhne, (Munich, 1923), p. 27.

The strike movement, spontaneously initiated by the industrial workers of Hungary, reached its culmination in the summer of 1918. For in June, another major strike broke out which threw a glaring light on the concerted activity of the hidden forces behind the Social Democratic Party. This strike, which had broken out in the machine shops of the Hungarian Central Railways, was organized by the Communist underground with such ferocity and perfectness that within two days the whole country was paralysed by it, and only with the assistance of the armed forces could order be resolved.

After the termination of this strike, although a superficial form of order had been restored, the population of Hungary remained restless. In order to retain the confidence of the masses, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party had no other choice but to request the resignation of the Government. The front was also in a state of collapse. Under these conditions the country had only one way to go, the forming of a Hungarian National Council. Hungary was caught in the ferment of revolution.

Chapter II.

The October Revolution of Michael Karolyi.

In mid 1917 it was obvious that the Central Powers lost the War, and that the only reasonable policy would be to conclude peace at all costs. Professor Bibl, the eminent Austrian historian who was loyal to the former Austria and represented the best of its tradition, said:

"...the death struggle of the Danube Monarchy has come to its end. She was -we have seen it- gravely sick for a long time, sentenced to collapse..."¹

This is correct, confirms Professor Jaszi. "The Habsburg Empire was no longer capable of life, it had become an anachronism".² The leaders of Hungary, the "ancien regime", however, saw things differently. Torn between pro-Germanism and the idea of a possible separate peace with the Entente Powers, Czernin, Foreign Minister of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, could not perceive the extreme seriousness of the American intervention and, disregarding Karolyi's information on the capacity of that Power, made no adjustment in his foreign policy.³ Tisza also pressed on blindly with his traditional

¹V. Bibl., Der Zerfall Österreichs, (Wien, 1922), Vol. II, p. 558.

²O. Jaszi., Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, (Chicago, 1929), p. 23.

³Karolyi was in contact with one of the British diplomatic agents, Mr. Middleton Edwards, in Geneva who was acting as Consul there during the War, and such observed the activities of numerous consulates of enemy Powers who were residing in that city. Mr. Edwards in that capacity was able to supply concrete evidence and statistics to prove that America's intervention in the War was not an empty bluff as the Press of the Central Powers called it, but a terrible reality of which that time Continental observers were not able to perceive its full dimension and impact. (Michael Karolyi, Memoirs of Michael Karolyi, Faith without Illusion, (New York, 1957), pp. 73, 86.

policy of the maintainance of Dualism and, by all means, that of German-Magyar supremacy. Being the most powerful in Hungarian politics, he was incapable of either lifting himself above the narrow class interests or looking beyond the immediate future. Lukinich described well Tisza's fundamental outlook, saying that only within the existing system of Austria-Hungary could the racially isolated Hungarian landowners retain their land, "...against the encroachments of the Slavs, the Wallachians and the Germans..."¹

This controversial attitude of the Hungarian politicians could no better be illustrated than by quoting the semi-official newspaper, Budapesti Hirlap, which stated the following:

"...we proclaim in the face of the whole world that on no part of the earth's surface are the problems of nationality treated with greater patience, loyalty, and human liberality than in Hungary..."²

Let us now investigate what Tisza had to say on this subject. His opinion regarding the national minorities was somewhat different. He not only rejected the Memorandum written by the Yugoslav National Committee just before the collapse of the Monarchy, but insulted

¹I. Lukinich., A History of Hungary, (Budapest, London, 1937), p. 213.

²Budapesti Hirlap, (Budapest), June 20, 1917, p. 1.

them highly by shouting:

"...it may be that we shall go under, but
before we go, we shall summon enough power
to grind you to pieces..."¹

A few months before the collapse of the Empire, despite the King's command to introduce a new franchise reform, he deceived the common people by delaying this action and also deprived the nationalities of their rights.²

At this moment when universal collapse was imminent, these men-in-power, blinded by class pride and apprehensive of limitations of their absolute rule in the Monarchies, did not care what lessons the War might have taught. Their whole policy was concentrated upon securing for themselves the best possible terms and the possession of the largest possible areas. Szilassy tells us, in his Memoirs, that in these days of disaster the Hungarian political leaders even turned against their "beloved" King in order to block any change either at home or in foreign policy. He writes:

"...Everyone, with Tisza, Andrassy, and Wekerle at the head, violently opposed the slightest territorial concession. Some even went so far as to remind the Monarch that at his coronation he had sworn never to infringe the integrity of the domain of the Crown of St. Stephen..."³

¹R. Machray., The Little Entente, (London, 1929), p. 79.

²Lengyel, 1,000 Years of Hungary, p. 193; also Karolyi, Memoirs, p. 81

³J. Baron Szilassy., Der Untergang der Donaumonarchie, (Bern, 1921), p. 308.

In the face of this reactionary movement the democratic forces¹ proved very weak, especially since the leading Socialists were unmoved by the confused and opportunist policy of the government.

Among the several Hungarian political parties there were only three groups which realized the seriousness of the situation: Michael Karolyi and his associates, the radical minority of the Socialist Party lead by Sigismund Kunfi, and a small group of radical intellectuals. The views of these groups were expressed, in so far as the censorship permitted, in various articles and speeches. The most important was a memorial written by high officials and university professors, submitted to the King in October, 1918, under the title, The Situation in Hungary: a warning from a group of anxious patriots who stand apart from the politics of the day.² Although it reached the King, this pamphlet had no result. However, its content is important as it reveals the antecedents and causes of the October Revolution.

The theme of this Memorial was: a request to introduce "...immediate and far reaching social reforms..." in order to avoid "...disaster in which not only Hungary but the dynasty would

¹Erwin Szabo, the well know Marxist, who had left the Social Democratic Party, exposed the opportunist tactics of the Social Democratic Party in the columns of a bourgeois paper, "Vilag". He was also known as a fanatic of the "class-war" theory, a hater of parliamentary compromises, a pioneer of the idea of "direct-action".

²Nepszava (Budapest), 8 October 1918, p. 1.

parish as well". For it was felt and expressed, "...the danger arises not from the external loss of the War, but internal, of the conditions within the country...The public now is convinced..."continued the Memorial, "...that the Monarchy is not only willing to satisfy their just demands but is incapable to do so...that it is unprepared either to grant democratic liberties or the right of self-determination... that it is a feudal and militarist organization, forcing itself upon millions of unwilling subjects...This situation is all the more dangerous.." it was feared, "...because behind this public distrust in the Government are the ideas put forward by the Entente Powers, causing more harm than their arms". As a result of these conditions it was concluded, "...public life in Hungary has thus reached its critical stage...The new Government..." which in 1917 had introduced a limited Franchise and created a Welfare Ministry, "...was not able to solve these acute problems, but on the contrary, it allegedly drove people toward revolution and then tried to discredit them".¹

The Memorial then prescribed the political and social conditions of Hungary. It stated: "...the needed and long overdue reform attempts hitherto are deliberately blocked by the dominant oligarchy...While the common people are in poverty having scarcely any opportunity to work for themselves, the land is owned by the

¹ibid., p. 1.

landed aristocracy leaving nothing to the peasants". Since "...industry is not developed enough to be able to absorb the landless masses, this system of land distribution may be regarded as the cause of the enormous emigration from Hungary, unparalleled elsewhere in Europe."¹

It was plainly foreseen by the authors that the maintenance of the "ancien regime" after the War "...will be difficult and also dangerous". It was feared that "...the returning men will not be the same ignorant, submissive, humble peasants of pre-1914. The war has taught them to think..." and therefore, "...they no longer will accept the domination of the aristocracy." The "...old electoral system..." that Tisza desires to preserve, it was expressed "...also makes it impossible for the country to recover and to consolidate itself...It stands in the way of progress...Hungary will be able to cope with the intolerable burdens of the War..." it was concluded, if "...she will have a greatly increased productivity, a just taxation policy, an honest administration, a broadly planned policy of re-population and social reforms".. In short "...a policy to which the present oligarchy will not agree."²

In regard to the question of national minorities,

¹ibid., p. 1.

²ibid., p. 1.

it was suggested that only the "...democratisation of the country can heal the existing ill-fated relationship." The people of Hungary lived "...in peace for centuries with the nationalities..." and now, because of the "...ruthless, exploitation and oppression..." of nationalities by the Hungarian aristocracy, they had to seek outside relief to their grievances. Under these circumstances it was "logical" that these nationalities "...turned to the Entente..." who for their assistance in the War against the Central Powers, "...promised them the right of self-determination....If the Law of Nationalities..." which was brought forward half a century ago, "...had been carried into effect, it would have sufficed to reconcile the differences which exists to-day". It was made clear that "...unless universal suffrage is introduced at once, the peripheral Hungarian territories, inhabited by other nationalities, will remain in unrest and will defeat every constructive effort."¹

Continuing this was equally true to the relation between Austria and Hungary. "...The feudal conditions of Hungary obstruct every corresponding effort of the other nations in the Monarchy -Czechs, Jugoslavs, Roumanians...Nothing but the democratisation of Hungary can create an atmosphere in which the Monarchy could fulfill

¹ibid., p. 2.

its historic mission." To avoid both the "Scylla of Pan-Slavism" and the "Charybdis of Pan-Germanism" the creation of a League of Nations¹ was suggested which was to be based on the "...free co-operation of people living in the Danube-valley."²

The Memorial concluded: the failure to introduce universal suffrage coupled with the termination of the present regime "...will produce revolutionary outbreaks among the Czechs, the Serbs and the Roumanians." It was believed that even if a revolution does not break out, the Peace Congress after the War will not recognise the Monarchy whose very existence "...is hated by the majority of its peoples." The solution would be, "...to replace the obsolete Dualist constitution by a free League of Nations, which the Entente would accept as a good equitable solution".³

Although this Memorial created great expectations nothing had been done in regard to these reforms. The King showed himself weak and resourceless against the pressure of the Austro-Hungarian Camarilla, and when he finally appointed Lammasch⁴ it was

¹Before the collapse of the Dual-Monarchy, Karolyi's conception concerning the future of the Danubian and Balkan States was essentially in agreement with Louis Kossuth's well-known programme of Danube-federation. In this plan Kossuth urged alliance and co-operation between Hungarians, Czechs, Roumanians, and Serbs against the imperialism of the Habsburgs. (Karolyi, Memoirs, pp. 41-2.

²Memorial, op. cit., p. 2.

³ibid., p. 2.

⁴Professor Heinrich Lammasch, well known Austrian pacifist. It was proposed to entrust him with the formation of a government in the hope of influencing Entente opinion. While he did actually form one in October, 1918, it was however too late.

too late to solve these problems. Events followed one another too fast. Klofač[✓] declared, in early September, "...the Bohemian question has already passed beyond the stage at which it can be dealt with by negotiations with the Vienna Government".¹ In the meantime the national minorities were organizing revolutionary "National Councils" and were setting up new sovereign States². On October 7, 1918, the Czech and Serb revolutionary leaders published a joint manifesto declaring "...the Habsburg government was not competent to make peace proposals in the name of the Slavs"³. In the same month, the Deutsche Volksbund also commenced activities demanding a German Austria.

There was indeed cause for concern. On the international scene, in mid-September, the Allied Powers broke through the Bulgarian front and from that moment onward the resistance of the Central Powers was weakened steadily. This situation was reflected in the American notes which rejected the peace proposals of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The American reply clearly indicated that peace negotiations must be subject not only to the Wilsonian principles⁴

¹O. Jaszi., Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary, (London, 1925) ., p. 15.

²R. Machray., The Little Entente, (London, 1929), p. 81.

³Jaszi, Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 16.

⁴PUSFR, (ed. 1918), Supplement I., Vol. I., p. 12.

but to the "...notion of destruction of every arbitrary Power anywhere that can disturb the peace of the world".¹

Under these pressures and in conjunction with the Allies' answer, in which they insisted on the recognition of the independence of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, Emperor Charles made a final effort to save the Monarchy. In a memorial to his "...loyal Austrian peoples..." he invited them, under their right of self-determination, to form National Councils for the purpose of transforming Austria into a Federal State. Karolyi in his Memoirs wrote, "...this Manifesto was received by the Hungarian ruling class with horror..." for they felt "...the federalization of Austria would mean not only the end of the existing regime in Hungary, but the end of the basis of their existence..."² They were quite justified from their point of view:

"...The truth was of course..." (writes Karolyi) that neither "...the German people nor the Hungarian people would have suffered by this change, but only their oppressors, the autocratic ruling classes..."³

It is evident that the Hungarian politicians were not interested in the fact that Hungary, after centuries of struggles, had realized her independence without further danger of bloodshed. They continually

¹ A.R. Carrie, A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna, (New York, 1958), pp. 353-56.

² Karolyi, Fighting the World, p. 366.

³ Fighting the World, p. 366.

demanded appeasement, writes Strong, and after much insistence, had inserted a clause into the Manifesto which stated:

"...the integrity of the territory belonging to the Hungarian Crown shall in no way be affected..."¹

These internal and external circumstances were the "...unmistakable signals of the beginning of the end..." of the Dual Monarchy, and an indication for the organization of an independent and democratic Hungary, which had become a necessity.² Within the sphere of the progressive elements, it was agreed that the crisis in the Dual Monarchy, and more so in Hungary, would be more severe and dangerous than it would be in Germany. It was felt that the disharmony between the nationalities, the great poverty, and the enormous lack of education would inevitably end in anarchy unless the democratic forces could, in the last moment, succeed in organizing these elemental mass movements.

In spite of this the Hungarian Cabinet remained distant to the political situation. Instead of calming the menacing masses with the appointment of a popular government, and immediately announcing a series of real and substantial national reforms, the regime, even at its end on October 22nd, vetoed Count Karolyi's proposed Bill for a

¹D.F. Strong, Austria, Transition from Empire to Republic, (New York, 1939), p. 95.

²Carrie, A Diplomatic History of Europe, p. 353-56.

Declaration of Independence from Austria.¹ In this tragic situation the Government lost its control over the country. The Army, which temporarily remained loyal to this fallen Government, was rapidly becoming revolutionary. Therefore, the members of the forming National Council, although enjoying the confidence of the public, lived in a constant fear of this regime. "...It was a political game...", but the responsibility for it should have concerned the Government and not the nationalists, as Professor Kaas tries to explain in his Bolshevism in Hungary. The credit should belong to those "...who at that time..." before the revolution of October 30, "...risked their heads, but it was a risk worth taking, for the stakes were high..that is national independence".²

The forces of progress doomed the "ancien regime" of Hungary. Public opinion demanded the establishment of a popular government, and although the regime did everything to persuade the King not to appoint Count Karolyi as the new Premier, they could not hold back the masses in proclaiming the Republic. These frantic efforts of the reactionaries had fatal results. Had Karolyi been appointed a month earlier the events in Hungary most likely would have taken a very different course of action.

¹Fighting the World, pp. 371-5

²A. Baron Kaas, and F. de Lazarovics., Bolshevism in Hungary, (London, 1931), p. 39.

With the proclamation of the Social-Democratic revolution of October 30, Hungary opened up a new chapter in her history and at the same time, unknowingly, began her death struggle for national existence. Among the enemy forces of the new Republic were the members of the "ancien regime" who attacked the new national Government from all directions. The Right-wing leaders of the Social Democratic Party, pursuing private interests discredited the Government in its every action, pushed Hungary into the arms of the Communists.

Examining the evolution and the immediate developments of the Hungarian Social Democratic Labour movement, as we saw it was opportunist. The Party from the outside, undoubtedly seemed strong, well-organized, and one which carried the spirit of revolutionary movement. But this was not the case. The Socialists leaders did not represent the interest of the working-class. Karolyi in his Memoirs writes:

"...I was unable to understand, and am still what it was that united Garami so closely with Vazsonyi,¹ the man who had destroyed the franchise coalition, sabotaged and wrecked the franchise-reform, and began a violent agitation against the most outspoken of the suffrage leaders..."²

Today it is obvious that the Right-wing of the Social Democratic

¹Vazsonyi, leader of the bourgeois Democratic Party.

²Karolyi, Fighting the World, p. 319.

Party had little to do with the creation of the October Revolution, except to follow the course of events. In fact, the confusion created by their inexperience in political matters was such, Kaas writes, that the "revolution" which broke out on October 30, 1918 "...came as a surprise event to them, having been planned to take place two or three days later".¹ The Social Democratic Party had great men. But they were either pushed into the background or were driven out of the movement by the opportunists.

In this light it is obvious why the events of October 30 were spontaneous. The Social Democratic Party, the leader of the industrial proletariat, was incapable of taking the initiative, therefore,

"...without any plan or unity, mostly on their personal initiative, the revolutionaries seized the General Post Office, the Telephone Central, the Railway Stations and the military buildings, ...the troops refused obedience and rushed out into the streets..."²

While this was happening various parties of the National Council, isolated from the outside world, were engaged in endless arguments

¹Bolshevism in Hungary, p. 39.

²ibid., p. 39.

concerning the question of leadership. This absurd situation is well cited in the writings of Baron L. Hatvany:

"...at 5 in the afternoon we were still in complete ignorance of the great events which were to happen in the course of the night..."¹

It is a well known fact, that while the delegates of the National Council were trying to reach a compromise on a leader, the great public of Budapest, bypassing the Socialist spokesmen, proclaimed Karolyi, an aristocrat, as Premier. Fate was finally catching up with the Socialists. All the progressive elements, regardless of origin, repudiated the Right-wing of the Social Democratic Party as well as the "ancien regime". This distrust toward Right-wing Socialism was not without foundation. From the beginning of the revolution they had hindered every action of the Government, discredited its members, and finally, when the entire political, social, and economic system of Hungary was in ruins, had sold out to the Communists. Why the Hungarian Social Democratic Labour movement fail to fulfill its historic mission, the answer is simple, I think. The Socialist avant garde in Hungary neither bore comparison with Russia's Communist leaders; nor had the organizing capacity of the German Social Democratic Party.

¹L. Baron Hatvany., "Egy Honap Tortenete", (History of a Month), "Esztendo" (Budapest, December, 1918), p. 65.

The progressive groups, long before the October Revolution, had foreseen that a new Hungary which formerly had been excluded from all legislation, administration and jurisdiction would come to power at the end of the War. Erwin Szabo worked, from the beginning on a plan of uniting all progressive forces, and on the eve of the revolution urged Socialists, Radicals and Karolyists, to unite into common organization. From such a union, he expected a new government programme, as soon as the oligarchic regime was defeated.

During this organizational period, these progressive elements were also very well aware of their shortcomings. They saw that the greatest weakness of their revolutionary movement was the insufficient number of men with practical experience. Knowing the corruption of the old administration, they were aware that the revolution could only succeed if it relied on new men who could be appointed at a moment's notice. It was felt that a committee, represented by all progressive parties, should be formed and entrusted with a list of all the experienced officials, intellectual workers and officers of the reserve on whom the revolution could rely. It was a gigantic task, further obstructed by the criticism of opportunist elements who ridiculed it as an impractical plan conceived by doctrinaires and theoreticians. After the fall of the Revolution, however, it was generally believed that one of the main reasons for

failure was the lack of this panel.¹ Due to this lack of organization, which obstructed the Karolyi Government in every phase of the revolution and eventually led to Bolshevism, the National Council could not be formed until the very last moment, when the soldiers and students were already building the barricades. Had the National Council been formed a month earlier, it would not only have been better prepared for the work of government, feels Professor Jaszi, but in expressing public opinion it could have influenced the King into granting independence.² The responsibility for the mortal delay of constituting the National Council, rests chiefly upon the Right-wing Socialists, who for private reasons blocked the formation of this all important organ.

The National Council, the foundation of Hungarian democracy, in its constructive work of the revolution could have counted on various organizations.³ Among them, the Social Democratic Party was most important as it was the best organized group in the Hungarian democracy. In the process of dissolving the "ancien regime" and in organizing the worker-classes, during the critical days of the revolution the Party however showed its great defects. The combination of bureaucratic tendencies and

¹Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 20.

²ibid., p. 20-21.

³Z.A.B. Zeman, The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire, (London, 1961), p. 241.

opportunism marred the movement. The Hungarian Social Democratic Party, writes Macartney,

"...had nothing like the influence, even over the industrial masses, possessed by the sister parties in Austria and Germany..."¹

Even the overwhelming revolutionary spirit was unable to overcome the moral indifference of its leaders and the tendency to place personal interests before the welfare of the Labour movement. This is the reason why, at the time of its formation, a substantial number of Communist Party leaders were men who could not accept the policy of the Social Democratic Party or who had quarrelled with its leaders. It also included the narrow Marxist intellectuals who had not been in the Social Democratic Party because of their contempt toward it.

Neither could the Independence Party of Karolyi serve as a firm foundation for a democratic regime. Apart from its leader Karolyi, whom Zeman describes as "noble political statesman", and a few close associates, the Party was neither a true middle class nor a peasant party but a mixture of them, including all sorts of political malcontents and adventurers, who as Karolyi writes:

"...many of them were quite obviously out for no more than a quicker rise in the world..."²

¹Hungary, p. 263.

²Fighting the World, p. 152.

Cole agrees the Karolyi Party was quite unable to contribute to the revolution a serious and organized popular front, united on a clearly defined economic programme.¹

The Radical, bourgeois, Party was not only weak but was lacking initiative of organization as well. The Party included the most extreme elements, the ones which could not fit into any other group. One extreme was the Right-wing of the Party, composed of the representatives of trade and industry, who favoured an anti-feudal policy and sought radical land-reform. At the other extreme were the Marxists and "free-Socialists". The Marxist Socialists were the ones who could not join the Social Democratic Party either for tactical or moral reasons already mentioned, or because of their social position. The "free-Socialists" advocated Socialism but they were aware of the errors and inadequacies of Marxist orthodoxy. They disagreed with the Social Democrats in placing the prime importance on the development of an intellectual group, in the land system, in free co-operation and decentralization in opposition to State Socialism and finally in the disapproval of class war. They were the nearest to the programme and ideals of the Labour Party in England but, in a sense, they were more radical.

To complete the survey of parties in Hungary, it is

¹G.D.H. Cole., Communism and Social Democracy, (London, 1958), p. 244.

necessary to mention the ones which were not "progressive" but in an indirect way had a certain influence on the revolution. Such was the Democratic Party, which was expressly concerned with Jewish denominational interests, and slightly concerned with the economic and social questions. The Peasant Farmers' Party of Szabo of Nagyatad had hardly arrived at a clear realization of its opposition to the big estate system, when its unreliable leaders already betrayed the masses of peasantry to the "Latifundia" and the "ancien regime". The Christian Socialist Party was never able to free itself from the influence of the higher clergy, the Court, and the clerical landowners. The revolutionary National Council consisted of parties without organizing capacity and the Social Democratic Party, which had opportunism as its aim.

This review of the political forces would, however, be incomplete, without a mention of certain independent organizations. Remaining away from party politics, these organs were unconcerned with individual class interests, and were able to exercise great influence over the change of popular feeling which nourished the two revolutions. Among these organizations was the Sociological Society, which had great influence, though only over a limited circle. It played much the same part in the intellectual life of Hungary as the Fabian Society had played in England.

From the younger members of the Sociological Society emerged the already mentioned Galilei-club. The importance of this

club was that the intellectual strata of Hungarian Communism was drawn almost exclusively from this group.¹

Finally, to this survey of revolutionary forces belong a group which rose fast, and that is the Hungarian Bolshevik group. During the last year of the War, the doctrines of Russian Communism steadily penetrated into Hungarian public opinion where they exerted a powerful influence on the starving and war-disturbed intellectual classes. More effective than any indirect propaganda, were the actions, the speeches, and the radio messages of the Russian Bolshevik leaders. Many of the young journalists of the bourgeois Press were soon adherents of the Bolshevik doctrine. They were nevertheless scattered and unorganized, and became a force only when Bela Kun and his comrades arrived from Russia.

The final act of the revolution was carried through by the masses because it became evident that the activities of the Social Democrats might never culminate in revolution. Their demand was for the constitution of a National Council, and its direct association with the Hungarian Army, while the universal desire of the public was a socially progressive, free, and independent Hungary. It was believed that the King would give way under the pressure of this demand. It was because of the incompetency of the National Council and the stubborn opposition of the "ancien regime" against popular demand that the hysterical masses and soldiers threw themselves into the

¹

E. Andics, "Az 1919-es Magyar Proletarforradalom Elotortenete", (A Story of pre-Events of the Hungarian Proletar Revolution of 1919), "Szazadok", (Budapest, 1949), Vol. I-IV., p. 47.

affairs of politics and, with violent actions, commenced a social convulsion. The revolution was, therefore, in the first instance military, and not until later did it become a social, then a Socialist and finally a Communist one.

The first government which emerged from this convulsion was the Socialist Cabinet of Karolyi.¹ Its task was difficult, and this was clearly realized by the first proclamation of the National Council, issued on October 26, 1918.² The reforms outlined in this proclamation - national independence for Hungary, universal suffrage, friendly alliance with neighbouring states³ and equal position for the yet exploited industrial and peasant masses under the leadership of a genuinely creative intelligentsia. These were the fundamental principles sought by every strata of the public, the ones that the corrupt Social Democratic Party could not tackle.⁴

Social conditions, however, were already beyond repair when the Government came into power. There was hardly any possibility of stopping the process of social dissolution and

¹Karolyi had always opposed the War and had made himself known as a friend of the Entente. He accepted and welcomed President Wilson's 14 points and thus shaped his policy accordingly. Although he was not a Social Democrat he wished to introduce full civil liberties, social reforms and liberal political institutions.

²Jaszi, Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, p. 23.

³The National Council at the same time also greeted the newly formed Polish, Ukraine, Czech, Yugoslav, and Austrian states, and emphasized the necessity of co-operating with them very closely, both economically and politically.
(Opočenský, J., Konec monarchie rakovsko-uherské, Prague, 1928).

⁴Jaszi, Revolution and Counter-revolution, ..., pp. 35-6.

revolution, and still less, of guiding it. In this situation the leaders of the revolution could not fully master the situation. Karolyi was confronted with demands of the new States, and the challenge of the great masses of returning soldiers, who were partly Communists.

The idea of Communism, from the beginning, hung over the Karolyi Government. It had for its intellectual foundation the "Galilei society" and the society of the "Twenty-year-olds". The prisoners of war returning from Russia led by Bela Kun shaped its revolutionary foundation, and the progressive intellectuals of the Hungarian society gave moral support. These forces, working together, brought about the formation of a Soviet type of State in Hungary.

In this heated atmosphere, although there was opportunity for work, no one wanted to attend to it, which further excited the masses. During the first weeks this turned into violence and looting. Since the October Revolution was primarily a military one, these irresponsible elements pushed the country into anarchy before they were brought under control.

The social convulsion, which led to military anarchy, was one of unforeseen problems the Government had to solve. It was neither possible to prevent the dissolution of the old military nor the rebuild an Army on whom a national democratic Government could have relied. That is why, on the third day of the revolution, the Minister of War was forced to declare the now

infamous, slogan that "...I do not want to see soldiers any more..."¹.

Not having any other choice, the Army was disbanded to such an extent that Francis Gondor, a member of the National Council wrote:

"...we had not a single patrol, not a single soldiers at our disposal..."²

A young national Government was needed desperately since the order, of the whole country, was dependent on moral force alone. Behind the estrangement of the Army from the Government, were the leaders of the Social Democratic Party, the pre-dominant partner of the government coalition. The Socialists were against the preservation of the old Army. Led by Joseph Poganyi, later a Commissar in the Proletarian Dictatorship, they pursued a systematic propaganda at the railway stations to win over the returning soldiers, disarm them, and send them home. While the dissolution of the old Army would not have been peculiar in itself, it became more serious and fatal because the National Council could not replace it with a new one, thus leaving the Government defenseless against an attack from the outside or a coup d'etat from the inside. The Government's proposal for the organization of a small, reliable defense force by voluntary enlistment of the peasantry was opposed by the Social

¹Teleki, The Evolution of Hungary and its place in European History, p. 137.

²F. Gondor, Vallomasok Konyve, (Book of Confessions), (Vienna, 1922), p. 22., (in Hungarian).

Democrats on the ostensible ground that a peasant force would be unreliable and counter-revolutionary. In fact, they were afraid of a solid base behind the Government. The winning of the revolutionary allegiance of the peasantry, with an immediate "Land Reform"¹, was prevented by the Socialists. In the end, the land question coupled with the military inevitably resulted in the fall of Karolyi that is, the national Government.

In addition to the social and military questions, there appeared a third and totally unexpected constitutional problem - that of the Republic - further undermining the position of the Government. When it came to the point of swearing in the new Government, the Socialists quickly aroused public opinion so high that unless it immediately denounced the Dynasty, the stability of the Cabinet might become endangered. Karolyi stood on the assertion that the National Council, as it was composed

¹Land distribution of pre-1918 Hungary:

Large and medium estates 54.4 percent of the whole territory
4/5 of the population had less than 20 acres per capita or nothing. 324 big landowners owned 20 percent of the land with an average of 41,000 acres each; the three largest - Roman Catholic Church, 1,000, Prince Esterhazy 570,000; Count Karolyi 25,000 of forest, 35,000 of meadow and arable land, Karolyi regarded the question of land reform as one of central tasks of his Government. He began to solve this problem with handing out his private estate to the peasants. (Karolyi, Memoirs, p. 46).

was not competent to make a final decision in the matter of proclaiming Hungary to be a Republic. And in turn he proposed to convoke the National Assembly as soon as possible, precisely what the Socialists did not want. While Seton-Watson is right to assume that behind the impossibility of convoking the National Assembly, and through it to legalize the Government, stood the detached frontier regions,¹ - it was not, however, the primary reason. As in Russia in 1917 the Bolsheviks did not let the Provisional Government consolidate itself, so in Hungary the Socialists were also afraid that a nationalist Constituent Assembly would give a solid base to the Karolyi Government. They forced the issue of the Republic, and compelled Karolyi to convoke the so-called "extended National Council" at once, which on November 16, 1918, proclaimed Hungary to be a Republic.

Graver than any of the difficulties of the revolutionary Government already mentioned, were the developments in foreign affairs on which the Karolyi Government had not counted before the revolution. It was assumed that the Entente would recognise Karolyi's efforts against the Central Powers, and the national minorities would recognise the loyal character of the Government's peace policy.² It was soon proven that both of these anticipations were pure illusions.

¹These frontier regions, detached by the Armistice Agreement, were regarded as part of the Hungarian State. They were, however, either annexed by the Succession States or under Entente military occupation.

²Jaszi, Magyars Schuld, Ungarns Suhne, (Munich, 1923), p. 59.

The Government could not be held responsible for the failure to make peace since the Entente, through General Franchet d'Esperey, was narrowing the territory of Hungary, and taking away districts which were pure Magyar in race.¹

Another disillusionment which undermined the moral prestige of the Karolyi Government was provided by the national minorities. Benes, in his Memoirs gives justice to these efforts. He writes that Karolyi's policy of "...racial justice which caused great dissatisfaction and alarm amongst us..." failed. He failed because he and his associates,

"...who, amid the welter of revolution, were desperately endeavouring to save for Hungary what at that time nobody else could certainly have saved..."²

Thus the policy, which all hoped would recognize the equal rights of all nationalities and would secure the development of their national autonomy of the "Swiss-model" against the "Mitteleuropa" scheme as Jaszi wrote, came much too late.³

¹Borkenau, Communist International, p. 112.

²E. Benes, dr., My War Memoirs, (London, 1928), p. 473.

³Professor Jaszi saw the solution for the nationality problem, in view for their future relationship with the Hungarian State, in the creation of an "Eastern Switzerland". According to his "Swiss-model" all the independent and yet oppressed national minorities living in the Danube Basin were to confederate on the principles of Liberty, Justice, Equality, and Friendship. During the course of War the Germans also came forward with a plan, which however was entirely different from Jaszi's "Swiss-model". After their final victory, they believed, Austria will depend on Germany. This in turn will give an opportunity to their interests to penetrate and annex the Central European and Balkan States to the German Empire. In the end although the idea of "Mitteleuropa" never advanced beyond the idea of "Eastern-Switzerland" it nevertheless created a great deal of anxiety among the peoples concerned.

It was impossible to compromise between Magyars and non-Magyars anywhere within the Hungarian State. The nationalities were, on one hand, "attracted" and "forced"¹ by the prospects held out by their "liberating"² kinsmen on the other side of the frontiers, desired to join with their parent countries: Serbia, Bohemia, and Roumania. These people, fully supported by the Entente, rejected Jaszi's every appeal.³ The cause of Hungarian Democracy was the concern of no one.

In describing the events of this time Jaszi wrote, in addition to these difficulties soon were added "...evils which perhaps might have been avoided". These evils resulted from the essential difficulties of the Karolyi Cabinet. These "...faults and defects...", which characterised the individual members of that Cabinet were partly a natural result of the political situation. The coalition of three parties had brought together men who differed exceedingly in their actions, their views and their outlook. Nor was the Government able to convert the old, corrupt administration into a modern minded and trustworthy one. The intended reforms failed because once in power the Social Democrats lacking

¹Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe between the Wars, (Cambridge, 1946), p. 186.

²Jaszi, Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 57.

³Oscar Jaszi as an opponent of the pre-1914 Magyarisation policy and as a friend of the non-Magyar nationalities of Hungary, during the October Revolution, and even before that time, time-to-time made several appeals to the nationalities and to their parent countries respectively.

competent persons filled the offices with political adventurers and demagogues.¹

This confusion and disunion was accelerated by the disorganization of the propaganda. It was a matter of greatest importance for the October Revolution to secure popular approval of its ideas and efforts. But in this it failed. Not only did the Social Democratic Party carry out an extreme Leftist, quasi-Bolshevist propaganda, but under their control the Bureau of Propaganda failed completely to advocate the common aims of the coalition. Instead, it published a meaningless and most varied selection of irredentist, chauvinist and anarchist literature.

It is a widely held opinion that the most fatal error of the Karolyi Government is its failure to carry out, or carry out in time, the reforms which it stood for. This inevitably led to the Communist revolution. Concerning the responsibility, however, the opinions differ.² The impartial critics hold the opinion that the responsibility for the failure cannot be attributed to the Government

¹Jaszi, Revolution and Counter-Revolution..., p. 61.

²In this connection Karolyi writes: "...I have often wondered if it would not have been wiser to refrain from keeping down the passions of discontent during the first weeks and let them loose, as victorious generals allow their armies to run wild for a couple of days. The peasants would have been firmly linked to our new order. This would have avoided the regime of Bela Kun as well as the Counter-Revolution. We chose instead the road of legality and order, discarding that of social justice..." (Memoirs, p. 127).

of Karolyi but to Social Democrats and their rising Communist rivals.¹ The fact, however, remains that the attempt failed and there remained only one alternative, that of an upheaval.

¹ Borkenau, F., World Communism, p. 112; Macartney, C.A., Hungary, p. 335-6; Seton-Watson, R.W., From Lenin to Malenkov, p. 60; Street, C.J.C., Hungary and Democracy, p. 199.

Chapter III.

The Struggle for Equilibrium.

During the last months of the October revolutionary era, Hungary lived in a state of national exasperation. The period was characterized by the total breakdown of all social institutions because the Karolyi Government was much too weak to withstand the greatly increased Communist assaults. Hungary was the best soil for Bolshevist propaganda in Europe. To the Communists, victory was also important, for, "...Hungary was admirably situated to form the focus of the World Revolution." The country was surrounded with states also exhausted by the War. They were suffering under the impact of both revolutionary spirit and that of the hardships of national reconstruction.

"...Let Bolshevism but gain a firm foothold in Hungary, and it could not fail to spread until it covered the face of Europe..."¹

The Hungarian Communists led by Bela Kun, however, were not theorists of Communism. They instead preached practical violence and the use of force in order to get into power. They believed that the Bolshevist control of the State, the transfer of industry and landed property to the proletariat, would solve every problem and from then

¹C.J.C. Street, Hungary and Democracy, (London, 1923), p. 102.

on there would be bread and work and general prosperity for all. Events, however, took a different course. After the Revolution of October 30, the population of Budapest, composed of refugees, soldiers and other mixed elements, doubled and the city became the centre of confusion. And as the economic life of the country suffered and collapsed under the occupation of foreign troops, as the transit and commerce broke down, unrest and unemployment grew and the Communist propaganda became more irresistible to the population.¹

This propaganda grew even in countries of age-long culture with firm democratic institutions. In Hungary, where the Labour movement was weak, these uncultured, and illiterate people were susceptible to propaganda and could freely set the old order in flames destroying good with the bad. Within a few days there began a long series of disorders and sporadic acts of terrorism in the nation. The Communist tactics were simple: whatever the Government promised or did, was denounced as a worthless "crumb of reform", and in place of this, the Communists promised: universal freedom and prosperity. The Communists also promised a new form of government in the interest of the working people. Their idea was to transfer the burdens of the working classes to the capitalists and

¹D.H. Miller, My Diary at the Conference of Paris, (With Documents), (New York, 1924), Vol.IV, pp. 6-8, No. 218-20.

landowners, but to retain all the power in their own hands according to Lenin's idea of the revolutionary elite.¹

Sacrifices in blood and money counted little to the Communist propagandist. "...the money came from Russia..."², claims Street, and the lives of a few thousand men, compared to the millions who perished in the War was a cheap price to pay for the "liberation" of humanity. The Communists regarded this fight as "...change of front in the war where not nation fought against nation but the exploited classes against their bourgeois exploiters."³ The mutinies in the barracks of the First Honved Infantry regiment and in Maria Theresa barracks, the mutiny in the prison on Margaret Blvd., the riots and bloodshed in Salgotarjan⁴, the attack on the offices of the Socialist Party organ, and the disturbances week after week, were clear evidence of the increasing hold of Communism.

The followers of the Social Democratic Party were indifferent to these disturbances. Therefore, the core of the

¹Mod, 400 Ev..., p. 481.

²Hungary and Democracy, p. 102.

³D. Nemes, A Magyar Tanackoztarsasag Tortenelmi Jelentosege s Nemzetkozi Hatasa, (The Historical Importance and the International Effects of the Hungarian Proletar Dictatorship), (Budapest, 1960), p. 7. (in Hungarian).

⁴A mining center in North Hungary.

revolutionary masses was drawn, at first, from the stratas of the "lumpenproletariat". It was drawn, secondly, from among the young and energetic enthusiasts who saw only the "splendid idea" of Communism and were not aware of its controversies. Communism taught these men that the transition to Communism is an inevitable process. They were also taught that morality, religion, and justice were merely bourgeois conceptions, ergo it is the task of the proletariat to destroy them. This theory was responsible for the alleged misinterpretation of the October Revolution. These were the tactics of these young Communist idealists, who accepted the Proletarian Dictatorship as the beginning of the "World Revolution".¹

In this dangerous situation, where the old order was caught between the revolutionary mob and the enthusiasm of young men, all seeking for an undetermined change, "Order" could not be upheld. The "forces of tradition" were put aside. On the one hand, the people refused to side with the old parties which for decades had abused power in the interest of the great landowners, of the Roman Catholic Church, and of the usurers. On the other hand, even the progressive, the Independence Party of Karolyi, and the Radical Party of Jaszi,

¹In this connection it is interesting to note the metaphysical standpoint of these young men. Their philosophical approach to this problem was a unique mixture of materialism and idealism, of mysticism and the belief in violence. On one side fed by Marx, Lenin, Trotzky, and Bucharin. On the other side by Fichte, Hegel, the mild Riukert and Windelbond, Kierkegaard, Husserl, even the medieval mystics. B. Fogaras, Logika, Budapest, 1953, p. 107.

failed to influence public opinion consistently. There did not exist a bourgeoisie in the Western European sense. The middle class was discounted since it always had been content to remain in complete subservience to feudalism and clericalism.

Between the Right and Left, the balance of power was held by the Social Democratic Party. During these months of crisis, the Social Democrats proved to be the only organized political force in the country. It was the only party with a large and disciplined membership. Thus the fate of Hungary was vested in it. All this resulted in a dubious outcome. At once the question arose - was there another way? Could this party use a wise moderation? Could it avoid the abuse of the almost dictatorial power given it by the collapse of the feudalistic State? Could Hungary, escaping both the "Red" and "White" terrors, grow into a solid workers' and peasants' republic? When the Social Democratic Party neglected the consideration of these possibilities for an equitable solution, it failed its mission which was the preservation of Hungary's national integrity.

Still less was the party able to work in another direction which derived from the special condition of Hungary. The Social Democratic Party had no leader enjoying the absolute confidence of the masses such as Adler or Bauer in Austria. In addition to his talent and purity of character, Adler risked his life during the War for the cause of his people. Bauer shared with his people all the hardships of the trenches and of imprisonment in Russia. No one could accuse such men of opportunism or lack of courage when they set themselves against

the popular demagogues. Whereas in Hungary, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party were inferior both morally and intellectually to these Austrian Social Democrats.

Therefore, under these circumstances, the Social Democrats could only have held off the encroachment of Communism and saved the country from total destruction had they not taken full advantage of their unrestricted power over the masses. The Social Democratic Party failed to realize that it could not rule the country alone. They must allow equal weight to the peasantry. Since they could not destroy the middle class they, therefore, should allow its organization in progressively minded parties.

The Social Democratic Party applied none of these alternatives thus the October Revolution inevitably slipped away from the path of a democratic coalition. The Socialists soon realised "...that the more they claim the more they get, and perhaps everything".¹ But on the other hand, as the Party's capacity for restraint, loyalty and tolerance diminished, its followers under Communist influence, began to denounce its feeble, opportunist and corrupt policy. The accusations directed against the old leaders

¹Vilag, (Budapest), October 2, 1918, p. 2.

of the party increased and a demand was made for their expulsion from the Party. When they were removed they were succeeded by Communists, instead of, honest Social Democrats. This invasion of Bolshevik spirit, in turn, resulted in the submission of the Government to the dictatorship of the Social Democratic Party.

As soon as the Karolyi government had taken power, it announced its intention of holding new elections for the National Assembly. The Social Democrats, in their determination to win absolute majority resolved to use all possible methods. They provoked violent conflicts with the Christian Socialists, obstructed the election campaign of the Small Farmers' Party, and through threats forced out a coalition with the bourgeois parties in which the Social Democrats had the upper hand. Their organ, the Nepszava, openly stated, "...if the new elections did not bring them the majority they desired they would disperse the National Assembly by force of arms".¹ Thus grew the spirit of dictatorship in

¹ Nepszava, (Budapest), October 9, 1918, p. 1.

the Social Democratic Party, proving that there was no longer any distinction between Communism and Socialism in Hungary.

Under these disturbing conditions the Government did not have much time to devote to the already underestimated land-reform. Although this would have been the central problem of the revolution, its solution was more and more postponed. While there was no danger from the counter-revolution, since feudal interests were quiet for the time being, the disturbance came from the Left-wing of the Social Democratic Party. The Left demanded, on one hand, introduction of a new taxation system on land-rent. On the other hand, they desired, upon Kautsky's agrarian theory, to save the large estates at any price since they regarded the peasantry as a reactionary class.

In regard to these controversial theories, the Karolyi Government held a different view. Jaszi pointed out that Hungary had no time to experiment on social theories, that unless hunger for land of the peasantry is satisfied there will be no escape from another revolution. He also

pointed out, in vain, the extraordinary dangers hidden beneath this Communist demand for the Socialisation of the land, and of the impossibility of setting up "producers co-operatives" with a backward peasantry. And that the slogan of Socialization could save only the existing latifundia. It was also stated that Lenin, who was at least as good a Communist as Bela Kun, and who also was a politician with insight and intuition, had not hesitated despite all his Communist fanaticism, to practice the partition of the land estates among the Russian peasantry.¹

But the Hungarian Communists saw things differently. While they were modeled on the Russian example, they interpreted it in their own way.² They believed that if Lenin was able to achieve Socialism in a backward country, they surely could do the same thing in Hungary. But while they accepted the "idea" at the same time they rejected the Russian method of allowing the peasants to re-claim the land. Hungary, they concluded, will set the example to the world that in the West a proletarian dictatorship could and will go forward without and in spite of the peasants.

¹Revolution and Counter-Revolution..., p. 84.

²V. Kolarov, "Revolutionary Alliance of the Workers and Peasantry", The Communist International, (London, 1929), Nos. 9-10, Vol. VI, p. 439.

It is one of the paradoxes of the Hungarian Labour movement that Lenin, the father of Bolshevism, took sides with the Karolyists against this dubious agrarian policy. The Communist propaganda, however, was masterfully applied. The Left, through the Propaganda Bureau and its "agents-provocateours", stirred up the hatred of the already hysterical proletariat to the point of violence against the government's proposed Land Reform.¹ If they had say, the Communists claimed, they would turn the land over not to the "...isolated, stupid, reactionary peasantry but to the powerful Red Producers' co-operatives".² In the end, this lack of care and contempt of trade-unionists toward their natural allies, the peasantry, sealed the fate of the October Revolution. And the Land Reform, which was meant to be one of the greatest achievements of the revolution was rejected. "...the responsibility for the failure..." however cannot be laid on the government of Karolyi writes Borkenau, but on "...both, Social Democrats and on their Communists rivals".³

With the Communist pressure, the Social Democratic Party lost not only its self-discipline but also its self-reliance. The order of the day was socialisation and by December it was clear

¹It was proposed by the government that the extreme limit of exemption from expropriation should be 500 joches. (1 hectare - 2.4 acres; 1 Austrian joch - 0.575 hectares or 1.42 acres).

²Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 84.

³Communist International, p. 113.

that disaster was inevitable. Meanwhile conditions were growing critical because of the Communist enforced Social Democratic policy, which in turn curbed the government's actions. "...The political course of events...", writes Seton-Watson, "...was similar to that in Russia under the Provisional Government".¹ And the Government's reshuffling, in December, was preceded by the resignation of two conservative ministers who were exemplified in the Petrograd events of May 1917.² In further connection with the Hungarian problem Kaas tells us:

"...this Cabinet crisis unfolded the fact that a strong faction had gained a footing in the Social Democratic Party, which was thus placed between two millstones..."³

The so-called "moderates" although fearing the spread of Communism, declined to take any steps against it, for they desired to preserve the unity of the Social Democratic Party. They were confronted with the dilemma, that the orthodox Marxist-Socialist has to face some time or another, of having to define his stand towards Communism.

¹Seton-Watson in his book, From Lenin to Malenkov, (p. 60) gives an interesting comparison between the Russian Provisional government of 1917 and Karolyi government. He, with actual examples, demonstrates that the Hungarian events had been preceded a year earlier in Russia and thus the tactics of the Hungarian Communists were the exact copy as the one applied by the Russian Bolshevik Party.

²ibid., p. 60.

³Revolution in Hungary, p. 64.

In evaluating the roots of failure, both the leftist Bohm and the rightist Garami in their respective books,¹ attributed great importance to this problem. They blamed the Communists and the Radical intellectuals as the ones who had paralysed the Karolyi Government.

The Radical Jaszi, however, had a different opinion. The Communists could not have won, he believes, had these Socialists been determined to support the Karolyi Government. Karolyi himself agrees with this. He writes:

"...The Socialists could not carry out their programme because they did not have a majority. We were prevented from accomplishing our land reform because the Socialist Ministers sabotaged it. We could not create the people's army, recruited from the peasantry, for the Socialist Ministers regarded the peasantry as a counter-revolutionary element and threatened to resign if we proceed with it..."²

Seton-Watson also supports these arguments. In his analysis of the failure of the Hungarian Labour movement, he draws a parallel with Kerensky and Tseretelli of Russia. He proves, that in both cases the Social Democrats were reluctant to consider their Communist "comrades" as enemies.³

¹W. Bohm, Im Kreuzfeuer Zweier Revolutionen, (Munich, 1924); also E. Garami, Forrongo Magyarorszag (Hungary in Ferment), (Vienna, 1922).

²Karolyi, Memoirs, p. 145.

³Seton-Watson, From Lenin to Malenkov, p. 60.

The public did not have to wait for long to find out the real tactics of the Socialists. At the time Hungary was proclaimed a Republic, they, trusting in their final victory, declared their intention of transforming the national revolution into a socialist one.¹ The Socialists' conduct towards the Communists was benevolent and tolerant. But the Communists soon outgrew this "patriotism". They began to attack the ranks of the Social Democrats, who in turn felt the need of self-justification. The Socialists in their self-defence against both the masses and the Communists, published an infinite number of party propaganda.² These, however, aside from their immediate psychological effect, if they had any, had no other value. Since these publications were to serve the further purpose of bridging over the gulf between the Second and Third International, the Russian Bolsheviks naturally took them at face value. They assumed that the Hungarian Social Democratic Party was performing its historical mission: i.e., its fight for the imminent "World Revolution". Expressing his satisfaction and wishing it further success, Lenin greeted this Social Democratic Party.³

¹Nepszava (Budapest), November 16, 1918, p. 1.

²J. Nyiri, From Karolyi to Bela Kun, The Truth about the Revolution in Hungary, (Ilford, Clarck, C.W. and Co., 1917).

³V.I. Lenin, Valogatott Muvek (Budapest, 1953).

The Voros Ujsag began violently to attack the moment it appeared in print. "...The time had come..." it wrote, "...to work out to their utmost consequences the ideas of Socialism".¹ This article, written by Bela Kun, was directed against the leaders of the Social Democratic Party and their party organ, the Nepszava. After this it was not long until there flamed up a bitter warfare between the two papers. "...A ruthless and unspeakable battle of words..."² describes Kaas, which respected neither moral nor tradition. "...Organize your Red Guard..." wrote the Voros Ujsag, "...the most urgent task before us is the equipment of the Proletariat with proper servicable weapons..." for, it continued, "...the Communist organizations must be developed so that at any moment they may be ready to take over the power."³

Thus commenced Communist propaganda in the year 1919. At the beginning of the revolution, the Government's position toward the Communists was, that no limit should be set on their propaganda so long as they used the accepted medias of political controversy. The events of these days prove that the Communists were well respected as the pioneers of a great, though unrealisable, idea.

¹Voros Ujsag, (Budapest), December 7, 1918.

²Hungary in Revolution, p. 69.

³Voros Ujsag, January 1, 1919.

On the other hand, it was also felt that energetic steps should be taken against those who rejected law and morality, those who advocated anarchy even resorting to force, robbery and murder. It was clear that these elements should be imprisoned, for it was better to keep them in custody, and show the sincerity and responsibility of the Karolyists, than to shoot on the unfortunate, misguided masses. It was also believed that this measure would be effectual if it was adopted at the outset, provided that the Government initiated energetic revolutionary reforms by an immediate settlement of the land question.

It is possible that "...it was too late to block the Communist advance", believes Jaszi, but he is certainly right saying that "...the Government chose the worst tactics to do so..."¹ At first there was no interference with Communist propaganda since the movement was underestimated. But when the situation became so acute that the Communists, influenced by the "July-days" in Petrograd, attempted to seize power by force² accompanied by violence against the Nepszava,³ the Government had no other choice but to arrest all of the participants. This action two months earlier might have saved the situation. But by this time, the Government had lost

¹Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 87.

²Seton-Watson, From Lenin to Malenkov, p. 60.

³Nepszava, (Budapest), February 22, 1919, p. 1.

its popularity and only aroused resentment. Jaszi expresses this well when he writes that:

"...the extreme brutality of the police, the manly behaviour of Bela Kun in the face of his persecutors, immediately attracted the sympathy of everyone to the side of the Communists..."¹

Aside from the public sympathy toward the Communists, a firm action taken by the nationalist Government was also prevented by other factors. Among the most important was the hostile attitude of the Entente representative, Lt. Col. Vyx, whose threats and insults undermined the Government's authority. As the attitude of the Entente grew worse the humiliated people of Hungary turned away with "disgust" and "hatred" from the Wilsonian doctrines. In the end the only alternative remained: Communism. This feeling spread to the ranks of the Army where the Soldiers' Council showed especial sympathy. The patriotism of the Russian Bolsheviks were held up as an example, as the ones who were destined to save their country from the predatory imperialism of the Entente.

The hold of Communism was greatly strengthened throughout the country by the increase of the disturbances created by the old regime. It was evident that both aristocracy and bourgeoisie were recovering from the initial blow of the October Revolution and were organizing and awaiting to strike back. In the midst of this social

¹Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 87.

whirlpool, created by counter revolutionary demonstrations, the public was scared and irritated. When the Government showed hesitation and undecidedness in the face of the "Whites" as it had shown to the Reds, it was felt that this Government was no longer able to save the reforms of the October Revolution, and if a choice had to be made between White or Red counter-revolution, the Red was preferred.

Into this flood of anger and embitterment, increased by hunger and unemployment, national humiliation and unscrupulous demagogy, there now came a new Allied ultimatum.¹ Dealing with Central Europe, Professor Benns traced this ultimatum to the pre-agreements of the Paris Peace Conference:

"...as the executor of the Habsburg estate; Czechoslovakia, Poland, Roumania, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, and Italy were the heirs, and by the time they assembled in January, 1919, they had already divided the territories of the Habsburgs in a rough, provisional fashion..."²

In this connection Lengyel puts forward another interesting argument:

"...the peace makers in Paris were now thinking of making war on the Soviets...in support of this new war they wished to secure the rear of Roumania (therefore)...ordered the Hungarians to withdraw behind a neutral zone..."³

¹Lt. Col. Vyx in the name of General de Lobit, on March 20, 1919, delivered this ultimatum to the Hungarian government.

²F.L. Benns, Europe since 1914, (New York, 1930), p. 112.

³Lengyel, 1,000 Years of Hungary, p. 198.

However this "neutral zone" meant a fresh and worse line of demarcation and cut off some purely Magyar districts. Adding insult to injury, Lt. Col. Vyx verbally stated that this new line was not to be regarded as merely an armistice line, but as a definite political frontier.¹

The Karolyi Government could not accept these demands, especially since it was felt that these demands were in contradiction both with the letter and that of spirit of the Belgrade armistice agreement.² The patriotic feeling, expressed by all stratas of the Hungarian people held the notion, that this new demand not only robbed Hungary from her age-long national possession, but completely prevented the economic restoration of the country as well.

Under these circumstances the rejection of this Allied note was inevitable. However, with a good counter-solution neither the Government nor the political parties could come up. There was only one person, writes Macartney, who came forward with a new

¹MMTVD., *ibid.*, Vol. V., pp. 677-9.

²Although the Monarch as a whole signed the Padua Armistice to General Diaz, only Franchet d'Esperey had the authority to deal with Hungary. Had the Karolyi Government not signed a new Armistice with the latter, foreign troops would have marched on Budapest. The Belgrade Armistice, however, was a military and not a political one. Clause 17 guaranteed that the occupied territories will remain under Hungarian legislation until the Peace Treaty. PUSFR., (ed. 1942), Vol. II, pp. 183-85.

proposal of how Hungary could be saved and that was:

"...the little Bolshevik agent Bela Kun, who said, that "if he were given the power, Russia would join forces with Hungary and drive the Roumanians back..."¹.

Thus the Vyx note brought the October Revolution to its end. What happened at that last crucial meeting of the Council of Ministers could again be best described with the own words of Karolyi. He writes in his Memoirs:

"...The Ministers of the Karolyi Party had tendered their resignation, not having the courage to accept or refuse the Ultimatum. I, therefore, proposed that the Cabinet should resign, after which I would charge the Social Democrats in conjunction with the Communists to form a new government..."²

They further agreed that Karolyi, President, would appoint a new Premier the next day, who would then communicate to him the desires of the Premier's Party. However it was concealed from Karolyi that while the Socialist ministers had agreed to these resolutions they already had concluded an agreement with the Communists wherein the two parties were to unite and were to form not a Social Democratic but a Soviet type of government.

Later, when the Dictatorship culminated in anarchy, both Socialists and Communists tried to disclaim responsibility.

¹Macartney, October Fifteenth, A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945.
Edinburgh University Press, 1956, Vol. I., p. 22.

²Karolyi, Memoirs, p. 154.

Borkenau believes, the contention was not the proclamation of a Soviet Republic, since it was obvious that this was the price for the collaboration of the Communists. But the argument was based upon the claim of both parties that each had insisted on this unification. At this point, to search for a scapegoat would be pointless since both parties bear the responsibility for unification. Jaszi claims that the responsibility for double dealing lay upon the Socialists. They, he says, "...joined in government with the very people who for months had abused them in every conceivable way."¹ Borkenau gives the same interpretation on the Socialist policy. Although Lenin was against the merger with the Social Democrats and, instead, insisted on the organization of an independent Communist Party, Kun and his associates disregarded the warning.²

But this came later. It is easy to see that both parties wanted this unity on their own accord. This is proven by the fact that the negotiations, which were being held in the prison cells of the Communists, lasted less than half an hour.³ This afforded them only time enough to form a pact, thus excluding the possibility of any serious talk about its content. Moreover, the

¹Jaszi, Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 96.

²Borkenau, Communist International, p. 118.

³MTFVD., *ibid.*, Vol. V., pp. 688-9.

reason to merge was obvious. There was either the choice of fighting or combining. In principle, the Communist parties could not tolerate peaceful co-existence with any party, but, in reality, they were too weak to assume power alone. Kun must have realised this. If this is so it partly explains his defiance of Lenin. An open fight with the Social Democrats would wreck his Soviet experiment at the outset. But on the other hand, the Socialists hoped that the merger with the Communists would put an end to the violent attacks brought against them, especially within the trade-unions. The truth however was, that neither party had any choice, for none of them was strong enough to take over the government alone.

It has been asked many times by the writers of the Hungarian revolution why the Karolyi Government could not have attempted to continue. From the Hungarian point of view, Karolyi at the last meeting of the Council of Ministers gave this answer:

"...the existing coalition Government could not continue, since the deep humiliation of Hungary robbed the bourgeois parties of all moral support..."¹

He felt that "...none but a purely Social Democratic government can maintain order..." since "...the actual power has indeed for months been exclusively in the hands of the organized workers..."²

Karolyi in his speech, further admitted that his western orientation, i.e. his policy of reliance on the Wilsonian

¹Karolyi, Memoirs, p. 154.

²ibid., p. 154.

doctrines definitely failed. In regard to this problem he said this:

"...Hungary needs a fresh orientation which will ensure the support of the International Labour movement..."¹

He felt that another coalition, or a bourgeois government, with its lack of moral and social unity, would make matters worse.

From the Communist point of view, whether it would have been the Communists' responsibility to force the Government to carry on, Rosa Luxemburg gives the answer. She had encountered the same situation in Germany and unlike Kun, rejected it. Discussing the chances of the German Communists she said that:

"...The Spartakus-bund will not accept power for the mere reason that all other parties failed..."²

She felt that only a safe majority within the working class could win and hold powers. But Kun was not a Marxist in the true sense of the word.. He was bewildered as well as carried away by his comparatively easy successes. The possibility of an easy capture of power, resulting from the crisis of wounded national pride was evident. He, therefore, took advantage of the situation and seized power.

¹ ibid., p. 154; also PUSFR, (ed. 1945) Vol. XI, pp. 134-35.

² R. Luxemburg, Kritik der russischen Revolution (Budapest, 1946), p. 57.

³ Borkenau gives an interesting character study of Kun. According to him, Kun came into contact with Communism while he was a prisoner in Russia. And while Lenin who was a splendid psychologist concerning Russians, completely mistook and so entrusted him with the task of carrying through the revolution in Hungary. (Communist International, p.114).

The Communist leaders also confirmed the fact that: the Communist coup d'etat was the immediate result of the Vyx note. At the meeting of the Workers' Council under the leadership of M. Garbai, on March 21, 1919, they proclaimed the formation of a Soviet Republic.¹ Also at this meeting Garbai gave vent to these emotional feelings:

"...Entente Imperialism inscribed on its banner Democracy and the Right of Self-determination but now that it is in a position to carry these principles into action it belies them..."
"...we placed our trust in the intention of the Entente to aim at a just peace. Our trust is entirely destroyed by this new ukase..."
"...The new policy for us must be to look to the East for which the East has denied us..."²

There is a general tendency to attribute great historical changes to the last link in the chain of a long series of causes. The Vyx note thus was not the real cause of Hungarian Communism. It was preceded by a long historical process: the centuries of class domination, the poisoned nationalities policy, and the social policy of the past half century. The violence and corruption of the Tisza era, the five years of war, and the anarchy followed closely upon the disintegration of the army. These and many other correlated factors finally led to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

¹O. Rutter, Regent of Hungary, (London, 1939), p. 161.

²MMFVD., *ibid.*, Vol. VI., Part I, p.

Chapter IV.

The Communist Revolution of Bela Kun.

Communism made a dramatic entry into Hungary in the Spring of 1919. This resulted from the defeat of the Central Powers and from the impact of the Soviet revolution in the East. However, this Soviet type of republic, which lasted only five months, has been dismissed by most historians as only a passing episode in the turmoil which swept over Central Europe. Yet the leaders of Soviet Russia, during that time, considered it to be of equal importance to the Russian revolution. Even Lenin, who was more apprehensive, considered it as an event of greatest importance to the Communist cause.¹

The importance of this Communist revolution was recognized by the leaders of the Third International. As soon as they learned the true nature of the Bela Kun regime, that it was truly a Communist revolution, and not just a Socialist, a pseudo-Communist one, these "professionals" proclaimed it to be the beginning of the World Revolution. The one which they had anticipated. In connection with this, the Pravda commented:

¹V.I. Lenin, Valogatott Művek, (Budapest: Szikra, 1953), Vol. XXIX, p. 616.

"...the proletarian revolution has made one big step in the very middle of Central Europe....The Hungarian revolution will quickly come to life in the neighbouring countries..."¹

The question was asked by many: did the Communists really believe in the possibility of a world revolution? An answer to whether they really believed in it or merely wanted the general public to believe in it, is unimportant. Their ultimate aim was the revolutionising of Europe, and they believed, one of the means to this end would be the extension of the Communist front into Hungary. To this end every Hungarian newspaper carried comments about Austria's imminent union with Germany; the victory of the Spartakusbund in Berlin; about riots in Paris; of the dangers that menaced the old constitutional traditions of England. From Italy they announced a general strike, and from Belgrade the outbreak of Communism. According to the Communist papers, the French proletariat had decided to join the Third International and France faced a financial collapse. Most importantly, Soviet troops of reinforcement were advancing toward Hungary.²

Jubilation over the Hungarian Communist revolution was based not only on the morale factor of having another Communist State but also on the fact that in Hungary the bourgeois government

¹Pravda, (Moscow), 25 March 1919, Editorial.

²"Magyarország a Második Szovjetköztársaság", Vörös Újság (Budapest), 23 March 1919, p. 1.

had voluntarily, in the interest of national self-preservation, given up its power to the Communists and appeared to support them. Also, Hungary was a more advanced country than Russia, and being geographically situated in the middle of Europe, revolution could easily spread from there throughout Central Europe and the Balkans.

In spite of this overwhelming enthusiasm, Lenin took a more cautious attitude. While he considered this Hungarian revolution to be a "...world wide historic revolution...", he did not share the optimistic hope for its success of Zinoviev and the other leaders of the Third International.¹ He repeatedly warned:

"...the difficulties of Hungary, comrades are great. It is a small country in comparison with Russia and can much more easily be strangled by the imperialists..."²

And he again advised Bela Kun that:

"...the bare imitation of our Russian tactics in all details in the peculiar conditions of the Hungarian revolution would be a mistake. Against these mistakes I must warn you..."³

The enthusiasm of the Russian leaders materialised itself in the chronological events of the Hungarian dictatorship.

¹V.I. Lenin, Speech to the Moscow Soviet on April 3, 1919, Sochineniia, (Moscow-Leningrad: Party Publishing House, 1932) 3rd. ed., Vol. XXIV, p. 218.

²Report to the closing session of the VIII. Congress of the Communist Party of Russia, *ibid.*, XXIV., p. 178.

³Telegram to Bela Kun on March 23, *ibid.*, XXX., p. 183.

These events, as they affected men and things, showed that the revolution, in its first weeks was not only popular among the masses of the proletariat but also among the middle class and bourgeoisie. This popularity was founded, on one hand, on the complete ignorance of the classes in matters concerning economics and politics. They were carried away by the prophecies about the dawn of a new era which was to alleviate poverty and extreme wealth. The future state, it was believed, would shape its policy to provide the best for all the working classes. This enthusiasm naturally prevented the masses from comprehending the full significance of Communism and the dangers involved in this experimental State.

On the other hand, it was demagoguery which dwelt on popular chauvinism. The masses, having suffered the humiliation of the Entente, were an easy prey to those demagogues who upheld the promise of Soviet military help against the "imperialism of the Succession States". This enthusiastic readiness for revanche was also the secret of the initial successes of the Hungarian Red Army which lasted until Bela Kun gave way to Clemenceau's ultimatum and abandoned the recovered Hungarian territories.

In spite of this initial feeling of popularity, it was the view of all the clear sighted Socialists that this Communist adventure was doomed for disaster, and that it would destroy all the cultural and democratic gains of the past quarter century.

The one reason they took part in this Government, therefore, was an attempt to preserve the integrity of Hungary. And, perhaps, to save the Labour movement from its final destruction.

The Radicals had the same theoretical reasoning, as the Socialists, in cooperating with the Communists. They had the vague understanding that they would be accepting neither moral nor political responsibility for the Communists regime. However, on no account, would they attempt to copy the sabotage of the Russian intelligentsia. It was further understood that since there was absolute hopelessness of opposition, they would leave politics aside and, instead, would assist the new regime in administrative and economic fields.

These progressive elements were intrigued by the success of Communism over the Russian masses - success which is attributable to Lenin's complete exclusion of any possibility of deviation from his interpretation to another concept of Socialism. They felt that the Liberation of humanity has no other choice but to go through the ordeal of this practical experience. If it succeeded, they thought, it would open the way to a new world order. If it did not succeed, they argued, then at the price of terrible sacrifices, the Russian and Hungarian examples would free humanity from the dogma of Marxism. This theory, at that time, had been discrediting every other concept of liberating the human race.

However, in the end, neither of these theories materialised. These illusionists soon found out that they overestimated the good sense of humanity. The facts had no bearings on the ones who carried them out.

"...the monstrosities of the Russian and Hungarian experiments had hardly any influence on the ideas of those who were carrying them out. Instead of correcting the theories to bring them into correspondence with facts, the facts were twisted to fit the theories..."¹

Ostensibly, the Dictatorship was exercised by the people. But in reality all the power was concentrated in the hands of the Revolutionary Governing Council, or rather, in those of Bela Kun and his associates. These men, in turn, formed a "dictatorship within the Dictatorship", governing through their tools, the political commissars.

Following Lenin's example Bela Kun kept for himself the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. He established and developed an alliance with Russia. He directed internal affairs and transacted all government business according to his own wishes. During his imprisonment in Russia, he observed the technique of Bolshevism, and from that concluded this threefold assumption: (1) Agrarian revolution, (2) Fight against the "reformist", (3) Peace negotiations with Capitalist states. From this Bela Kun seems to have drawn the erroneous principles that the land should not be

¹Jaszi, Revolution and Counter-revolution..., p. 114.

re-distributed among the peasants; that war, in view of the peace of Brest-Litovsk, was profitable; and, at the decisive moment, a revolutionist must form an alliance with the Social Democrats, and denounce it later as reformism.¹

Apart from the chaos and wild confusion created by violent meetings, demonstrations, and high flown oratory, the Reign of Terror inaugurated on March 21, 1919, was well organized. Everything had been prepared by Bela Kun and his associates before and during their imprisonment. They had nothing to fear from elements professing extremer views than themselves for such did not exist. And for the suppression and intimidation for the bourgeoisie they had only to follow the all too successful example of the Russian Revolution.

Then on the morning of March 22, two sets of posters announced the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. One was addressed to the people of Hungary, the other to the people of the world. These proclamations, bearing the title "To All"², heralded and apostrophesized an uncompromising halt of all further cooperation between proletariat and the bourgeoisie. They were, on one hand, a threat against the former ruling classes of Hungary and on the other hand, they were a challenge to the diplomacy of the Western States.

¹Borkenau, Communist International, p. 114.

²MTVD., Vol. VI, part I, p. 7.

Among these States, the Hungarian Communists were especially concerned with the reaction of the Austrian Social Democrats. Since Kun had intended to liberate the territories occupied by the Czechs and Roumanians, it would have a matter of great importance to secure a maximum degree of influence over Austria, that is, Austrian industries and the stores of arms she possessed. In order to achieve this goal, from the very beginning, he began preparations for a coup that would proclaim the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Vienna.¹ The Austrian attitude was expressed by the Central Executive Committee of the Workers' Councils where they, apart from granting a trade-agreement, refused to cooperate in that direction.² The Austrian refusal was based on their dependent position on the Entente regarding the needed food-supplies which would have been stopped automatically in the event of close alliance with the Hungarian Communists.³ Furthermore, the fact should not be overlooked that Otto Bauer repudiated this Bolshevik experiment, as he dwelt on the historical principles of true Western Social Democracy.⁴

¹Charles A. Gulick, Austria: From Habsburg to Hitler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948), pp. 73-4).

²Otto Bauer, Die Osterreichische Revolution (Wien, 1923), pp. 137-38.

³Quoted in Julius Braunthal, Die Arbeiterrate in Deutsch-Oesterreich (Wien, 1919) pp. 44-45.

⁴Protokoll der Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeitspartie Deutschosterreich, (Wien, 1919), Vol. X, pp. 31-XI.3. (Brand and Co.), pp. 144-5; also Dr. Heinrich Benedict and Associates (W. Goldinger, Dr. Verosto, Dr. F. Thalmann, Dr. A. Vondruska), Die Geschichte der Republik Oesterreichs, (Wien, 1954), p. 58.

Just as Karolyi won the nation by his slogan of national independence, so the Communists claimed the same slogan of nationalism in order to stir up the fermenting patriotic emotions of the masses and, by their help, gain and subjugate the bourgeoisie. Bela Kun expressed this thought in his other Proclamation "To All", aiming at every stratas of the population. The Proclamation reads:

"...The Hungarian proletarian revolution was produced by two separate forces: one was the resolve of the working men, the agricultural labourer, and common soldiers to endure no longer the yoke of capitalism; the other was the Imperialism of the Entente.

.....we place the revolution of the Hungarian proletariat under the protection of International Socialism, and are firmly resolved to defend its achievements against every attack to the last drop of our blood..."¹

However it was clear that none of these patriotic sentiments inspired any of the Communists leaders. At a meeting on March 29 Bela Kun, himself, explicitly declared that he and his associates did not stand on the basis of the territorial integrity of Hungary. Later, at a sitting of the Budapest Workers' Council on April 11, he further confirmed it by saying:

"...we based our actions² on the prospect of a World Revolution, that the latter is the only Fatherland of the Dictatorship and of the International Proletariat..."³

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, Part I, p. 3.

²With reference to the Entente Ultimatum presented by Lt. Col. Vyx on March 20, 1919.

³MMTVD., Vol. VI, Part I, p. 185.

The Dictatorship subjected everything to the prospect of this world revolution. Everything from the Soviet Constitution, the whole governmental system, to the Red Army was used as an instrument for the suppression of opposition and for safeguarding the undisputed class rule of the proletariat. On April 2, 1919, the provisional Constitution of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was made public. It granted the working people legislative, executive and retributory rights through the Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Councils.¹ The supreme dictatorship was to be exercised by a National Congress of these Councils (Soviets). The Councils were not, however, invited to collaborate in the drafting of the Constitution, nor could the dictatorship be exercised by this National Congress which, so far, was not in existence.

The electoral procedure for the National Council was also an outspoken denial, a mockery of the popular will and public opinion. Apart from the fact that only those who were supposedly loyal to the regime were allowed to exercise their Franchise, the election was a fraud. The Government further expressed its contempt toward the National Council when the deputies were convoked three months after the general elections, on June 14, only to be dispersed again by Bela Kun's command on June 23, 1919.

¹ibid, pp. 100-3, Decree No. XXVI of 3 April 1919; also Decree No. XXVII of 3 April 1919, (ibid., p. 103).

The Hungarian Communists unfolded their system with astonishing clarity, and used the power they had so suddenly acquired with cold-blooded ruthlessness and determination. The first decree of the Revolutionary Governing Council threatened with capital punishment everyone who offered armed resistance to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.¹ All the regular Courts of Law, all civil and criminal procedures were suspended till further notice. The Revolutionary Governing Council, furthermore, authorized the Commissar for Justice to suspend temporarily all judges and public prosecutors and to entrust anyone, whom he pleased, with the direction of the Law Courts and the Chambers of Lawyers respectively. In conjunction with these decrees, a Revolutionary Tribunal was created which was bound by no laws and no system of procedure. Since its members were chosen on the basis of their allegiance to the Dictatorship, consequently, they were laymen, primarily ignorant, in several cases illiterate, outside the legal profession.²

This communistic system made away with the bourgeois concept of crime. Or rather it reversed the principles of the Criminal Law. Everything advantageous to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was permissible, everything that might be detrimental

¹ ibid., p. 5, Decree No. I of 24 March 1919.

² ibid., pp. 32-3, Decree No. IV of 28 March 1919. This Decree was adjusted by Decree No. XLV of 9 April 1919 (ibid., p. 167); Decree No. XCIV of 17 May 1919 (ibid., pp. 496-8); Draft, of 14 June 1919, submitted to the Committee of the Supreme Councils by the Commissaries for Justice (ibid., part II, pp. 77-85).

or injurious was forbidden. Personal safety and individual liberty ceased to exist; the binding force of the Law was suspended; the independence of the judiciary destroyed, and the brutal club-law allowed to reign everywhere.

No special judiciary being needed, all examinations qualifying for the Bench and the Bar¹ and all law examinations at the universities were stopped.² "...In the criminal procedure, the aim of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Hungary..." another ordinance read, "...is to defend the Dictatorship from all attack and to safeguard the individual and legitimate interests of the working proletariat."³

Special councils were created for the execution of this ordinance. In all criminal cases begun before August 1, 1914, the proceedings were stopped. All other cases, where trials and sentences were instituted in the interests of the preservation or protection of the capitalistic society, were to be regarded as manifest injustices.⁴

This ordinance placed everyone at the mercy of the

¹People's Commissariat for Justice, Ordinance No. 9 of 25 March 1919. Library of the Institute of the History of the Party, Budapest.

²People's Commissariat for Public Instruction, Ordinance No. 7 of 25 March 1919. Library of the Institute of the History of the Party, Budapest.

³MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, pp.234-6, Decree No. LXII of 17 April 1919.

⁴ibid., p. 261, Decree No. LXVII of 20 April 1919.

Revolutionary Tribunal since there was nothing which could be qualified as a violation of decrees of the Supreme Court of the Soviets. It was solely for this Tribunal to decide what denunciations were to be regarded as "urgent" in the interest of the Proletarian Dictatorship.

In anticipating public reaction as a logical outcome of these dictatorial decrees the Government, in the course of the first days, appointed workmen's representatives everywhere who were invested with unlimited power and were bound by no laws, rules or regulations.¹

The Red Guard which was formed from these Workmen's Representatives, carried out another decree. As a possible threat to the Proletarian Dictatorship weapons of every sort were confiscated.² Detachments of the Red Guard searched every house and threatened everyone with the Revolutionary Tribunal if firearms, sword, or even an unusually large sized knife were found in his possession.

Bela Kun based Hungary's foreign policy on the same communistic principles he introduced in the fields of Justice, Legislation and Constitution. He did so because the Soviet does not look on itself as a nation, it refuses to recognise the existence

¹ibid., pp. 40-1, People's Commissariat for the Interior, Ordinance No. 1 of 30 March 1919.

³ibid., p. 6., Decree No. III. of 24 March 1919.

of other States, and finally it takes its stand on internationalism. It acknowledges no government except the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, it has only one objective: to work for the advent of the world revolution. From the beginning, this was the ultimate aim of Lenin and of his disciple, Bela Kun.

The victory of Communism, in Hungary, was also considered to be important for it meant the extension of the revolutionary front. 1919 was the year of the Spartakist struggles in Berlin and of the temporary victory of the proletarian revolution in Munich.¹ At that time, there also was every prospect of an outbreak of Communism in Vienna and Slovakia. Budapest was, therefore, an important base of operations for Lenin. Through the Hungarian Soviet he hoped to gain a footing in Poland and, in case of material success, to extend his front across Germany as far as the Rhine. It was doubtful whether France would have then had the moral strength to resist. Nor would England have found a safeguard in the sea, since the attack against her was planned to take place in Asia.²

Under these circumstances it is clear that the proletarian dictatorship of Hungary served Lenin's interests, and Bela Kun could not pursue an independent foreign policy of his own. Hungary, or at least Budapest, was to serve as an outpost and

¹Hans Dr. Beyer, Der Kampf der Roten Armee in Bayern 1919, (Munich, 1919).

²"A Parizsi Konferencia", Nepszava (Budapest), 1 April 1919, p. 1.

propaganda center for the preparations of the world revolution. The role played by Bela Kun in this grandiose and far flung scheme was but a secondary one, that of pushing forward the front and holding the position already won.¹

The Dictatorship accessed to power with the slogan that the help refused by the West must be sought in the East. This slogan meant a rupture with the Western States. It created a state of constant tension and burst, eventually, into an armed conflict. It was this situation which necessitated the creation of an army and, for this end, Communism had to turn to the slogan of Nationalism. Although the People's Commissars never ceased to preach and practice the theory of class war, they adroitly called upon the patriotic sentiment of the masses to join the Red Army. Consequently, an army with twofold character had to be created. On one hand, a national army was needed which would march against the invading Czechs and Roumanians. On the other hand, a Communist, an international one, which was to check the masses assembled in the previous one.²

The creation of the Red Army by William Bohm and his Chief-of-Staff, Aurel Stromfield, an active soldier, was an outstanding achievement. They created an army from nothing, or rather, less

¹V.I. Lenin, Speech at the Sitting of Workers', Soldiers' Council, Valogatott Művek, (Budapest; Szikra, 1953), Vol. XXIX, pp. 270-3.

²MTVD., Vol. VI, part I, Decree No. XXIII/K.T.E. of 30 March 1919.

than nothing, for before the Communist revolution the troops had been the centre of anarchy. From the returning prisoners of war, supported by Russian emissaries, they formed an international Red Regiment which became the core of the Red Army.¹ In order to ensure a class army only workers were enrolled in it. Later when the need of experts in warfare became vital, ex-officers of the old Army were drawn in, followed by a compulsory enrollment for everyone.

During the first weeks of the intervention, the Red Army scored victory after victory. It liberated Slovakia from Czech occupation and pushed the Roumanians over the river Tisza.² A Hungarian victory seemed imminent and the confidence in the Dictatorship was boundless. Even Lenin, in a speech on April 17, rated the Hungarian events above the Russian revolution:

* "...In comparison with Russia, Hungary is a small country, but the Hungarian revolution perhaps plays a larger role in History than the Russian revolution. In that cultured country all experiences of the Russian revolution have been taken into account and Socialism firmly established..."³

The initial successes of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Red Army naturally came as an unpleasant surprise to the victorious Powers, and placed them in an uncomfortable position.

¹"Az Elso Nemzetkozi Zaszloalj", Voros Ujsag (Budapest), 1 April 1919, p. 1.

²MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, pp. 305-7, Report of the Commissariat for Defense.

³V.I. Lenin, Speech addressed to the factory committees and union of officers in Moscow, Sochineniia, (Moscow-Leningrad: Party Publishing House, 1932), Vol. XXIV, p. 261.

They could neither deny the sudden extension of the Communist front nor overlook the rapid spread of Communist ideas which meant danger to their own nationalistic States. For the moment they could not do anything about it. The victors were as weary and exhausted as the conquered. It would have seemed a hazardous undertaking to remobilize the disbanded troops or to combat, once more, the regiments stationed on the occupied territories.

Although, at this point, the Entente Powers could not intervene, the Red Army was stopped by an entirely different force. The economic failure, at this decisive moment, broke the backbone of the military advance.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat treated the problems of economics and finance in the same way as it was treated in Russia. It was promulgated arbitrarily and brought home to the masses by means of speeches, placards, and articles in newspapers. By these medias it was conveyed to the public that all private property had ceased to exist. That every financial institution, every business with more than 20 employees¹, all landed property exceeding 100 yoches,² all jewelry over 2000 Crowns worth³, were converted into "common property". All these were socialised or using the Communist terminology were taken into "joint possession" on the

¹ibid., p. 37, Decree No. IX of 27 March 1919.

²ibid., p. 114, Decree No. XXXVIII of 4 April 1919.

³ibid., pp. 78-9, Decree No. LVII of 13 April 1919.

principle that "everything belongs to the society". . . .

These socializations were performed as the fulfilment of the principle of Soviet economic organization. Their importance could be measured next to the belief in world revolution among the doctrines of Communism. It was further believed that, by the means of these processes, the existing social system might be changed and poverty banished forever from the existence of mankind. There were many confusing ideas as to the nature of this basic doctrine. Since there was no opposing Power, the Communists disregarded the plain fact that it is impossible to immediately break away from an old established economic system. Socialization is primarily a moral recasting, a product of education and organization, and not, as some commissars naively assumed, a mechanical inventory taking¹ subject for experiment. In the lack of these considerations the whole country was handed over to governmental councils (Soviets) to perform this transition. They intended to demonstrate that the Marxist doctrines were practicable and were to be accepted in exchange of the capitalistic order of society that had broken down.

¹To demonstrate the general misconceptions held up by some Commissars, we cite the well know Hevesy incident: Four days after the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was proclaimed Hevesy said: "...in the Peoples' Commissariat for Socialisation by working twenty-three hours a day we have in the past four days organized nearly every section of the industry. And where it has not been possible yet to complete taking over the concerns, they are already working under the direction of a Commissariat for Control", A.Kovacs, Voros Oktober, (Budapest, 1937), p. 295.

A little later and with a little less optimism Commissar Bohm declared on April 18 that, "...we have the advantage over Russia that we have been able to begin reconstruction at once, and have succeeded within four weeks in socialising more than a 1,000 concerns, while the Russians socialised no more than 513 in a whole year".
ibid., p. 357.

Nowhere was this artificial socialization more superficial than in the agriculture. This was the field in which the Hungarian Communists departed the most from the Russian model, though it was the one in which they should have followed them the closest. Lenin recognised that in an agricultural State it is impossible to achieve the aims of revolution against the will of the peasantry. Thus, he concluded, their hunger for land must be fully and immediately satisfied. He solved this paradox with the proclamation of the "principle of common ownership". The land was distributed while the fanatics, who were forcing the dogmas of Communism upon the rural population, were upheld. The Soviet form of co-operatives, which on the side were set up peacefully, acted as examples to demonstrate the higher standard of the Soviet system.

The Communist dictators of Hungary, accepting Kun's theories, chose another method, one which was described by Lenin as the height of absurdity. These men-in-power, built on their blind dogmatism and hatred of peasantry, refused the partition of the Latifundia and instead converted them directly into "Productive Co-operative Societies". Yet these societies had nothing in common with the true co-operatives. They only stirred up ill-feeling in the small landholders and peasant farmers, in addition to the existing class-war against the bourgeoisie, the rich farmers, the clergy, the old army, and the bureaucracy.

Socialization in practice soon justified the theory of anti-Communist thinkers that it necessitated a rigid and all

embracing State centralization. It soon became clear that no limit could be set to the process of socialization, for the Communist system tended to swallow up not only the big institutions, but, in many cases, businesses with less than twenty employees. On March 20th, the Commissariat for Socialization ordered all shops, with the exception of drug, tobacco, books, stationary, and provisions, to be closed immediately. No goods were allowed to be sold or removed from the premises without the consent of the Commissar for Socialisation. This ordinance was concluded with the words that "...all those who defy this order will be punished by death".¹

Trade was paralyzed, however, employers were to fully pay the salaries and wages of their employees, so that:

"...the employees should suffer no material loss because of the few days' suspension of work consequent on this ordinance..."²

"...Only those who work have a right to live..."³

another ordinance decreed, disregarding the fact that with an embargo on all funds and securities; houses, landed estates, shops, factories, and banks expropriated and socialized, the possibilities of gaining a livelihood by work were reduced to a minimum.

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, pp. 28-9, Revolutionary Governing Council, Ordinance of 25 March 1919.

²ibid., pp. 28-9, Revolutionary Governing Council, Supplementary Ordinance of 25 March 1919.

³ibid., pp. 38-9, Decree No. XI of 27 March 1919.

The banks were placed under Government control and an embargo was on all safe-deposits.¹ Anyone who requested money for his business or farm had first to prove his liabilities before he could obtain from the Commissar for Socialisation a clearance which enabled him to get from his own deposit the amount required.²

This decree was followed by the introduction of food cards. An official order was needed to obtain these cards and, in order to get such an order, one had to belong to some trade union. In this way the whole population was categorised and put under trade union *ergo* dictatorial control.³

The Housing Ordinance, issued during the first days, was a direct attack on private property, and on the domestic life of the citizens. All private houses were declared to be the property of the State.⁴ A rule was established that every adult person was entitled for one room only, while a whole family could have no more than three.⁵ Every house had to have its elected Workmen's Representative, who invariably belonged to the lower classes, and

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 39-40, Decree No. XII of 27 March 1919; also Decree No. XXV/K.T.E. of 1 April 1919 (*ibid.*, pp. 77-8).

² *MTVD.*, Vol. VI, part I, p. 10, Stenographed Protokol of the Revolution Governing Council, 22 March 1919.

³ *ibid.*, pp. 309-10, Commissariat for Food Distribution, Ordinance No. 28/KeN of 26 April 1919; also Decree No. LXXIV of 27 April 1919 (*ibid.*, pp. 325-6).

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 37-8, Decree No. X of 27 March 1919.

⁵ Tibor Szamuely, "Lakaskeresok", Voros Ujsag (Budapest), 15 April 1919.

under the pretext of supervision, had free access to every apartment. He was, furthermore, entitled to interfere in any private affair. The People's Commissars, Vago and Szamuely issued a decree stating:..

"...all applicants for lodgings who openly or secretly foment discontent or disturbances, or agitate against our soldiers in housing matters will be punished with death..."¹

A separate ordinance was issued to the effect that all articles of furniture left in the commandeered houses must be reported to the Central Furniture Distributing Office. Consequently, purchase could only be made through this office and exclusively by the proletariat. This Government agency sold furniture on the "hire-purchase" system, while the original owners were left without any compensation at all.²

A decree ordered the separation of Church and State, declaring religion to be a private affair.³ During the services, however, soldiers of the Red Guard were to stand ready to arrest the priest at his first hostile word against the regime.

In the schools, religious teaching was forbidden.⁴

¹ibid., pp. 214-5, Decree No. LIX of 16 April 1919.

²ibid., pp. 709-11, Commissariat for Public Housing, Ordinance No. 12 of 17 April 1919; also Ordinance No. 2-3 of 22 April; No. 4 of 24 April; Nepgazdasagi Tanacs No. 39 of 12 June 1919 (loc. cit.)

³ibid., pp. 263-65, Commissariat for Religious Affairs, Ordinance No. 947 of 17 April 1919; also Stenographed Protokol of the Revolutionary Governing Council, 22 March 1919 (ibid., p. 12).

⁴ibid., pp. 179, Commissariat for Education, Ordinance No. 14 of 18 April, 1919.

Nothing, for that matter, was allowed to be taught except what the Hungarian Soviet Government found pleasing and permissible. The curriculum was altered to conform with the communistic ideas and their view of fostering "self-reliance" and "self-assertiveness" in the young. In the place of religious instruction, which was barred, it was decreed that an endeavour should be made to strengthen the ethical values and the idea of "Internationalism" in the students by "appropriate lectures and narratives".¹

All disciplinary powers were taken from the teaching staff and were bestowed on student-committees. Decisions concerning expulsion from all schools had to be reported in detail to the People's Commissariat for Education.² Misconduct during school hours was not the only punishable offense.

"...all utterances and actions in school or outside it directed against society as a whole, or revealing a lack of faith, lack of will power, or a deficient sense for socialistic self-discipline, solidarity, and collaboration will be punished..."³

The tutorial staff of all educational institutions, which were in clerical hands, were ordered to leave their spiritual calling or they were to be barred from any school activity.⁴ If they obeyed and passed an examination in conjunction with their

¹ibid., p. 111, Commissariat for Education, Memorandum of 2 April 1919.

²MMTVD., Vol. VI, part II, pp. 58-75, Report, submitted by the Commissariat for Education to the National Council.

³MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, pp. 313-15, Decree No. LXXI of 26 April 1919; also Commissariat for Education, Ordinance No. 27 of 30 April 1919, (Library of the Institute of the History of the Party, Archives, Budapest, A. II. 7/18).

⁴ibid., p. 73, Decree No. XXIV of 1 April 1919.

soundness in Communist principles then they were allowed to retain their posts and were regarded as "...employees of the tutorial profession". Furthermore as a reward of their "prompt" and "enthusiastic" collaboration in the work of propaganda, they would, applying the scale of salaries and wages, be awarded the equivalent to the wage of a master-mechanic.¹

The Government of Bela Kun did not hesitate to destroy the sanctity of family life. The Revolutionary Governing Council issued an ordinance which made concubinage equal with marriage. All formalities were abolished, and the parties concerned only were required to make a declaration of the intention of living in a common household. This caused such general indignation that the decree had to be immediately withdrawn.

As the logical outcome of the Terror which covered all aspects of society, the liberty of the Press had to be suspended. The newspapers either gave up the struggle or were "communized" and thus they were carried on by the conforming writers.² The leading newspapers, Nepszava now the companion-in-arms with the Communist Voros Ujsag, the Voros Munkas, and the Voros Katona, forced all newspapers out of print which defied the rising Red Star. In this

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, p. 482, Decree No. XCI of 16 May 1919.

²ibid., p. 11, Stenographed Protokol of the Revolutionary Governing Council of 22 March 1919.

connection a foreign correspondent wrote:

"...There is, for instance, no such thing as a free press in Hungary. All the newspapers have been nationalised and write exactly as they are told; all look alike and are alike uninteresting..."¹

Under these circumstances the more prominent writers and critics refrained themselves from any literary activity, giving way to the demagogues of the, so called, Marxist experts. These new arrivals, being ignorant and without any serious moral conviction, were writing phrase upon phrase of vulgar abuse. Even the Academy of Sciences had to close its doors on the charged of non-conformity to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The Academy, by the People's Commissariat for Education, was considered:

"...in its present composition in every respect inconsistent with the development and preservation of real Learning..."²

As an outcome of these reforms, introduced by the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, a collapse was predicted. That time it was generally accepted that a number of the fundamental theses of Marxism did not stand criticism - economic life without markets; price regulation by government dictation instead of by equilibrium of supply and demand; State regulation of production and distribution. All these in an economic system of any degree of development is either impossible or possible only in a highly developed omnipotent

¹ "The Revolution in Hungary", The Nation, Vol. CVIII, (May, 1919), p. 737.

² MMTVD., pp. 70-1.

State. Capitalism, in comparison, would be an idyllic institution.

Secondly, the inevitable collapse of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was based on the economic organization and social life of Hungary. A country with primitive agricultural conditions, under-developed industry, poor technical equipment, dominant peasant character of her population, and low moral level of its proletariat could not be expected to undergo this rapid transition successfully.

Thirdly, the collapse of this Communist experiment was based on the Bolshevik experiment in Russia. Although there were few reliable reports on the experiment of the Russian-Bolsheviks, it still could be concluded, that there was no true development toward the Communist "ideal". There was in progress nothing but the extirpation of Feudalism; the partition of the great estates, and the abolition of medieval privileges under Communist banner by methods of dictatorship in the name of the people. Therefore, at the time of the Hungarian revolution, the Russian Communists were performing two tasks: (1) The partition of the great estates among the landless classes, a pre-eminently individualistic, anti-Communist act, (2) The destruction of Western Capitalism with the attempt of replacing it by despotic Socialism, which again was nothing but a disguised State-Capitalism.

These attempts were the core of the Communist experiment in Hungary. The Dictatorship was, of course, too short lived to enable its logical results to grow into final consummation, for the premature reforms hastened the turn of the tide.

Chapter V.

The Turn of the Tide.

The optimistic views of the masses did not last long. On the contrary, every day the gradual change of public feeling was more visible. Compulsory military service was introduced and the people were pulled, once more, into the sufferings of the war. The economic condition which grew continually worse, through the blockade, was further jeopardized by the industrial and commercial disorganization and the increasing passive resistance of the peasants. Despite the worsening of the situation, the genuine Communists upheld their optimism. They believed that they were the complete masters of the situation. The reason behind this idea was the myth of the imminent world revolution. All the propaganda organs were directed to this prophecy, and whoever dared to question its validity was denounced as a counter-revolutionary.

The nucleus of this uncritical revolutionary faith was a tiny minority group of true Communists. They were bound together by personal contact, friendship and comradeship. To preserve their moral and intellectual cohesion they isolated themselves from all outside influence and criticism. To estimate their correct number is difficult. There were approximately fifty who had

initiative. However, those who had absorbed the propaganda of Russian dictatorship, and consequently stood in decided opposition to the old Social Democratic Party, are estimated at five thousand for the whole country. This tiny minority was the driving force of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. They were able, up to the end, to impose their will over the Socialists, trade unionists, and even the masses.¹

Within this group of leading Communists there were three slightly different factions. The first one was composed of men who were Leninists. For these men, who knew no doubts and scruples -whether it was intellectual or moral- the problem of revolution was simple: all private property must be confiscated; all production and distribution must become the business of the State; the aristocracy with the middle classes and peasantry must be ruined both politically and economically; and finally, all Capitalist States must be set afire by propaganda and by force -until the World Soviet Republic would emerge. They were convinced that nothing could prevent the realisation of this program. They believed that the Marxist law of economics would inevitably come to fulfilment.²

The second group was as dogmatic as the first one,

¹Mod, 400 Ev..., p. 479.

²ibid., p. 480.

however, they differed in their lack of intellectuality. They, being fanatics, were totally incapable of any comprehension of the situation and conditions. This group was under the obsession that massacre was a simple and rapid method of transition to Communism. If the bourgeoisie were overnight exterminated, they believed, there would be an end once and for all of the danger of counter-revolution.¹ Although these elements were under the control of the more sober ones they, nevertheless, executed and massacred an estimated five or six hundred people during the four and half months of the Dictatorship.²

Members of the third group were in contrast with the other two groups in that they were brought up on the high ethical standards of the German Idealists, and were the Marxist philosophers. They saw neither salvation nor release from the sins of Capitalism and war except through the denunciation of that order by the use of force. Their faith was so strong that to the end they insisted on the continuation of hopeless offensives, even when that meant the total destruction of the Hungarian Labour movement. It was also to these elements that the lasts of the

¹Before the second Roumanian attack an immediate collapse was predicted unless a new army could be created. But before that, according to Commissar Surek, there was to be a task even more important. Concerned with the extermination of the bourgeoisie, he said: "...the thing to do is to make hostages of all the bourgeois citizens, and to send an ultimatum to the Entente declaring that we shall kill every one of them unless they stop their march on Budapest."

Kovacs, op. cit., p. 425.

²Mod, op. cit., p. 481.

Socialists left the Dictatorship.¹

In this atmosphere of fanaticism and intolerance it was logical that the Communists developed the principle of the end justifying the means as one of their dogmas. This principle was accepted and aroused no protest when at the session of the Workers' Council of Budapest, on May 3, Bela Kun declared the new Communist ethics:

"...I do not admit the distinction between the moral and the immoral; the only distinction I know is the distinction between that which serves the proletariat and that which harms it..."²

Bela Kun further replaced the nationalist ethic of "my country right or wrong" with the new proletarian ethic of "my class right or wrong". The former was terminated in the World War. The latter, had it a real hold on the masses, would have brought a universal civil war. His aim was obvious, he wanted to introduce a new, Communist, moral relativity.

The Communist successess were short lived. The dictators failed, most importantly, to win the support of the peasantry. The Land Law, which was prepared by the Karolyi Government

¹Sigismund Kunfi at the session of the Soviets, June 9, said: "...In my view the conception advanced by comrades Pogany and Szamuely of the role and function of the Hungarian proletariat in the international revolution, amounts to this: that they ascribe to the Hungarian proletariat the role of saviour of the world, and that if necessary they will have it bleed to death in performing its part. This conception of Messianic Socialism...I do not share".
MMTVD., Vol. VI, part II, p. 701.

²MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, pp. 420-3, Stenographed Protokol of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council of Budapest, May 3, 1919.

in February, 1919 was overruled by Bela Kun. He did not understand Lenin's agrarian policy, that of letting the peasants re-possess the land. On the contrary, he preferred the formation of large Red Producers Co-operatives in the place of the Latifundias. Consequently the agricultural labourers instead of becoming owners remained discontented labourers, often working for the same landlords who in turn were promoted to be managers.

In contrast with the socialised big estates the small farm remained the home of the old order, of private property and individual initiative. Although the Communists, for tactical reasons, exempted the small properties from socialization, nevertheless, it was feared that it would have to go. The first reason was their inability to exist alongside the socialized large farms. Another reason was the "prudent policy" that was making it impossible for the small farmer to get machinery and raw material. Apart from this attitude the Communist system of distribution could not allow the small farmers, as Commissar Hamburger expressed, to freely distribute their produce:

"...since half of the agricultural soil consists of farms of less than 100 acres we cannot permit the owners to disperse as they choose of their produce, to force up the price of commodities and possibly inflict hardship on the industrial population. We must, therefore, place all the produce of the farms of less than 100 acres under the supervision of a Central Committee of Control..."¹

¹MMTV.D., Vol. VI, part II, p. 126, Stenographed Protocol of the National Soviets, 17 June, 1919.

Yet the Communist dictators, who knew the situation, were aware that this measure would be of little real effect. The underlying reason was not the conservatism of the peasants. Nor was it their objection to Communism. It was the fundamental antagonism to the division of labour. Since the exchange had ceased to exist, the farmer was getting less and less industrial products for his agricultural produce. When things turned from bad to worse he was further burdened. He had to accept the valueless "white money".¹ Under these circumstances it did not take long before the equilibrium of the economics completely ceased to function. Exchange could only be maintained by the use of force, executed by the "Lenin-boys" of Szamuely.²

In the end the problem of agriculture, which partly caused the fall of the Karolyi Government, doomed the Dictatorship. As the months progressed discord between town and country became more acute. Bloodshed became more and more frequent. However, it was not only on account of the economic conflict of interests. It was, rather, rooted in the moral gulf between town and country. This situation got further out of hand when, upon Bela Kun's plan, unemployed town workers were sent into the villages. They were to organize propaganda work and to help the

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, pp. 653-4, Decree No. CXI of 6 June 1919.

²ibid., p. 288, Revolutionary Governing Council, Ordinance of 24 April 1919.

requisitions. The villages naturally responded with hatred against the conceit, ignorance, and above all the anti-religious indiscretions of these Communists agents.¹ As an outcome, the propaganda campaigns were in vain. Despite these bad results, and the warnings of the agricultural experts, the dictators underestimated the danger. They held on to their program of socialization and refused to admit or believe that they were heading into destruction.

The progress of socialization necessarily limited not only the economic liberty of the country-districts, by compelling them in line with the factories, but it soon proved that the Communist State could not tolerate the existence of a private Co-operative movement. From his point of view Kun was right. He asserted that no Consumers' Co-operative Society could exist in a Communist order, since it grants privileges to its members over non-members. Kun, quite logically, included in his programme the socialization of the co-operatives and their conversion into the system of Red Consumers co-operatives.²

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part II, pp. 123-4, Stenographed Protocol of the National Congress of Soviets, 17 June, 1919.

²It is interesting to note that at a sitting of the Soviets, 28 May 1919, when Kun was criticised by an agrarian expert that his programme is something like squaring the circle, Bela Kun replied "...if that is so, we shall be performing the miracle of squaring the circle, for the co-operatives have got to be nationalised..."

MMTVD., Vol. VI, part II, p. 177.

Inevitably the leaders of the Co-operative movement began to feel the pressure of the Communist system and consequently joined the already antagonized stratas of the Hungarian society. Next in line to the peasant farmers came the industrial workers. They became not only the strongest but the most immediate opponents of the Communist system.

While socialization was in every field carried out by dictatorial decrees it was, however, unable to solve the difficult problems of the new economic order. The experiment was injured by the failure of securing industrial discipline, of the abandonment of free competition, of old monetary system and finally of forcing State control over production and distribution. In practice these defects were inseparable from one another and were being felt from the outset in this Communist experiment.

Capitalist society secures industrial discipline mainly by two means: discharges of the unsuitable workman, and the application of a flexible wage-scale. A Communist society however cannot employ these methods. While the first alternative is prevented by its own principle of the "duty and right"¹ to work, the second one come in conflict with the notion that

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, pp. 38-9, Decree No. XI of 27 March 1919.

it would be an anti-Communitistic act to make any distinction in the reward of labour -everyone must work according to his capacity and be provided for according to his reasonable needs.¹ In practice only supply and demand can create the extremely complicated and shifting wage-scale which ranges from the unskilled workers up to the workers of intellectual capacity. The artificial hampering of this system soon led to grave injustices. While the centralized administration could not substitute the free equilibrium of supply and demand, the bureaucratic division of workers into various categories burst into an economic anarchy.

In practice this experiment brought the Communists unpleasant surprises. From the beginning it was evident that industrial discipline, by lack of insight and leadership, had been gravely disturbed.² The workers became masters without the knowledge of how to make proper use of their dominant positions.³ The members of the Workers' Council were unable to maintain discipline. Moreover their appointment as councillors were insecure. Whenever a councillor or Commissar showed energy and demanded discipline a new,

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 606-7, "Mit Adott a Forradalom?"

² *MMTVD.*, Vol. VI, part II, pp. 105-13, Stenographed Protokol of the National Congress of Soviets on 16 June 1919.

³ "Munkarend es Munkafegyelem a Szocialista Uzemekben", Nepszava (Budapest), 23 April 1919, p. 1.

"loyal", one was elected in his place. His successor naturally left everything in its chaotic state.¹ The same situation had occurred in Russia. There, however, Lenin solved the problem. He proclaimed, on top of the political and military dictatorship, an economic dictatorship. The Hungarian plan, of instituting a National Economic Board, failed. Its failure could be contributed to the lack of time and, lack of competent personnel.

Although complaints and warnings were numerous they bore no results. The defect of the Communist industry showed itself as it was. The seriously decreased industrial production made necessary the stopping of free migration of labour. For the question of what the Government's programme would be with regard to industrial discipline, in order to secure productivity, Commissar Lengyel, at a sitting of the Soviets, presented this plan:

"...either the reserves of labour will obey their leaders, and then there will be an end of unemployment; or we shall throw out from our society of workers those who are unwilling to work..."²

This was not a solution but it was a threat for the class which constituted the very foundation of the proletarian dictatorship. It was the unconscious realization of failure and a return to the capitalistic way of thinking. For the proletarian State

¹MMTV.D., Vol. VI, part II, p. 141, Stenographed Protokol of the National Congress of Soviets on 16 June 1919.

²ibid., pp. 114, Stenographed Protocol of the National Congress of Soviets, 17 June 1919.

cannot expel the non-workers from its industrial organization. The most it could do was to throw them in prison. To restore industrial discipline by force, it was necessary to apply another hated method of capitalist industry. Soon the despised and abused system of wage differentiation, of overtime payment, of the Taylor system, and even of the piece-work system, were introduced.

The return of these methods, however, could not counter-balance an artificial wage increase on one side and a decreased productivity on the other side. This breakdown of industry inevitably led to a financial crisis. As one of the paradoxes of fate, the money question became one of the most difficult problems in the Communist experiment; the monetary problem, whose existence Communism does not recognize. The severe punishments to force the circulation of the valueless "white money" and of preventing the circulation of the old "blue-money" proved to be no solution, as no dictatorship in the world can alter the elementary laws of economics.

The proletarian dictatorship not only used methods of doubtful morality but was even prepared for a theoretical denunciation of Marx's theory of Money and Interest. In order to prevent the hoarding of money, a regulation was issued. It stated

that in the future the holders of new bank deposits would be able to distribute their deposits freely, it would even draw interest. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat which condemns unearned income apologetically stated that this system would temporarily continue. In this sense the same remark could have applied for terrorism, class politics, militarism, censorship, and the constraint of conscience; which would continue only until the State disappeared, until the classes ceased to exist and universal peace and complete solidarity between the workers achieved. But what was happening was just the opposite. State absolutism was extending in scope. Class differences were as acute as they could be. The Soviets were being more and more militarised. Even within the Labour movement itself dissatisfied groups were forming.

As the result, the merciless logic of the system defeated the system itself. After the small employers, and peasants; after the trade union and co-operative leaders, the masses of the agricultural proletariat came into conflict with the Communist regime. By mid summer the situation was critical. The meagre food supplies of Budapest were only to be secured with the aid of force. The terror was directed against both the agricultural proletariat -in order to make them work- and against the peasant farmers - in order to force them to give up their produce. This situation grew worse, and if it had not been for the fall of the Dictatorship, it would have ended in a civil war between the industrial proletariat and the peasantry.

The second main purpose of this Soviet experiment was the destruction of the old political system, of State, of bureaucracy and of militarism. Marx says that the economic system of Communism inevitably puts the State out of order. It terminates the old and corrupt bureaucracy, and finally makes impossible any sort of militarism, except a free and voluntary people's army of defense. Against this notion the Radical-Socialists¹ presented another one with an entirely opposite outcome. The abolition of free markets, free competition and the principle of freedom of association, they believed, could only extend the power of the State and in turn its bureaucracy's. They argued that the maintenance of a system of compulsory labour organizations, of compulsory production and distribution are only conceivable on the basis of a strong and ruthless militarism. Truly, nothing shows better the validity of these conclusions than the events of the Hungarian experiment.

The events of the proletarian dictatorship proved that the State not only had to increase its bureaucracy but had an even greater need for officials than the bourgeois State. Obviously so, the economic functions were taken over by the State, the ones formerly performed by private owners. These administrative difficulties were further deepened by the territorial disintegration of the country. The constant guerilla fightings on the borders of occupied territories created additional uncertainty in daily life. In every county there was a tendency to ignore the central authority of Budapest.

¹ The progressive members of the bourgeois parties with the intellectuals of the Social Democratic Party, who opposed Bela Kun's Communist experiment, were known as the Radical Socialists.

The regulations and requests from the capitol were purposely left unobserved. The split was finally completed by commissars from the provinces who sealed the break between town and country by retaining the falling food supplies for local consumption.

This rapidly growing food shortage was another contributing factor for the rearmament of the Dictatorship. A totalitarian minority can only maintain itself by military force. The worse the situation of the proletarian dictatorship became at home and abroad the more violent and ruthless became the spirit of militarism. This new militarism, in turn, gradually adopted all the methods, characteristics, and mentality of the old one. At first it relied on voluntary service, nevertheless, compulsory enrollment was soon introduced.¹ The Communists, as a last resort, re-armed their enemies, the bourgeoisie and the old military. But this was not all. Having revived the external forms and methods of the old army and that of military spirit, they also revived its arrogance and its worship of "la gloire".²

The third principal aim of the proletarian dictatorship

¹ibid., pp. 426-7, Decree No. CXXVI of 12 July 1919.

²Bohm, the Commander-of-Chief, declared: "...after the Russian army there is no army better disciplined or readier for service than the Hungarian Red Army...We shall win or die. But we have no intention of dying. We shall win because we must..."
ibid., p. 191.

was the creation of a new spirit, new popular faith, and new morality. Some of the leaders of the Dictatorship upheld a genuine feeling of seriousness and enthusiasm for the cultivation of education and art. It was, of course, Marxist education with the ultimate aim of creating a new religion of the State. The old doctrine of Socialism demanded State intervention in economic production, but complete freedom, complete anarchy in intellectual spheres. The Dictatorship stood, quite rightly from its point of view, for total socialization in both spheres. Universal compulsory labour could not be enforced without an intellectual foundation. In order to create one, the Communists applied the same methods as they applied in regard to other liberties. The attempt by introducing Press censorship, which virtually stamped out everything that was not directed to glorify the Communist State, however, was bound to fail. The promise of a better future neither satisfied the writers and artists, nor the masses.

It was logical then that the Dictators were soon filled with dissatisfaction and apprehension as to their future.¹ The total failure of the new economy, the unreliable administration, the growing famine, the corruption, the more and more ruthless

¹DBFP., Vol. VI, Document No. 2, p. 4.

militarism, and the abusement of thought steadily perverted the moral atmosphere of the proletarian dictatorship. The spirit of mistrust and ill will, nervousness and distress grew from day to day which was amplified with counter-revolutionary attacks. Although a few dictators realised the underlying causes of the economic, political and moral order, the attention was concentrated on finding and punishing conspirators, counter-revolutionaries, profiteers, speculators, "defeatists" and traitors. On one hand, the town saw in the country its mortal enemy, on the other hand, the country answered the regulations, requisitions and provocations, initiated from the capitol with a growing mass movement; anti-semitism.¹

In the last weeks of the proletarian dictatorship anti-semitism had assumed threatening proportions.² There were passionate speeches of condemnation by the Communists but in vain.³ In

¹The Jews played a dominant role in the history of the Hungarian Communist Party. Bela Kun was Jewish and so were two of his colleagues destined to play a major role in international Communism; Eugene Varga, the Hungarian-Soviet economist, and Matthias Rakosi the Stalinist dictator of Hungary. In fact, during Kun's regime most of the commissars, the managers of the State farms, the bureau chiefs in the central administration, and the leading police officers were Jewish. Of 203 high officials in the Bela Kun Government, 161 were Jewish. Werner Sombart, Der proletarische Sozialismus (Marxismus) (Jena, 1924), Vol. II, pp. 299-300.

²"Zsidoudozes", Voros Ujsag (Budapest) 20 June 1919, p. 1.

³At the meeting of the National Congress of Soviets, 21 June, Commissar Nyisztor complained: "...I am convinced that if anti-semitism gains the upper hand it will be the death of the proletarian dictatorship....Whatever contributes to this anti-semitism must be gotten rid of...Yesterday was Corpus Christi day, and a certain Leo Reisz, (a Jew) actually burst into the Church and spat at the Host..."
MMTVD., Vol. VI, part II, p. 207.

general, the Dictatorship accused the industrial workers of setting up pogroms and anti-Jewish demonstrations. Apart from the growing differences between Jews and Christians there was further misunderstanding between town and country; between bourgeoisie and proletariat. There was hatred of the small employers, shopkeepers, and officials towards the Dictatorship. Opposition grew between the Socialists and Communists, but the most important was the growing hatred of the industrial workers towards the regime. This ill will even affected the leaders of the Communist Party which resulted in an organization of mutual espionage. This ruined the Dictatorship. Its trusted staff shrank to a handful and in the end, the revolution which was to stir society to its foundation, had not as many reliable supporters to count on as would have served for the administration of a single county.

Lenin, who closely watched the Hungarian events, saw these anti-forces at work. He repeatedly warned Bela Kun:

"...Be firm. If there appears hesitation among the Socialists who yesterday joined with you in the dictatorship of the proletariat or among the petty bourgeoisie, crush the hesitation mercilessly. Hanging. That is the legitimate fate of comrades in war..."¹

But terror reprisals could not stop this process of

¹V.I. Lenin, "Greetings to the Hungarian Workers", 29 May, 1919. Sochineniia, 3rd. ed., (Moscow-Leningrad: Party Publishing House, 1932), Vol. XXIV, p. 218.

decay which originated in the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Empire was disintegrated and had ceased to exist as such. What remained was of no special importance to the Powers. Hungary was regarded as the spoils of war, and her territories were the best and easiest means to satisfy the demands of Serbs, Czechs and Roumanians.

Bela Kun's answer to the dismemberment of Hungary was a declaration of war to all States and Empires and to the whole of the bourgeois social order. His aim was to stir up class war in all Europe. He wanted to set loose the storm against bourgeois constitutions and organizations, predicted by the Third International. He said in a speech:

"...two world currents are meeting over Hungary, over the Soviet Government and the Proletarian Republic. We are seeking a collision between Imperialistic Capitalism and Bolshevik Socialism, and are ourselves participants in it..."¹

The Powers however wanted to avoid such collision.² They overlooked the altered circumstances in Hungary, and through General Smuts they entered direct communication with Bela Kun. The conditions which General Smuts offered were substantial improvements on those of Lt. Col. Vyx ultimatum. The new demarcation

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, p. 259, Stenographed Protokol of the Workers', Soldiers' Council, 19 April 1919.

²PUSFR., ed., 1947, Vol. XII, pp. 442-4.

line to which the Hungarian troops had to withdraw was modified to Hungary's advantage and formally declared to be a military boundary, without effect on the decisions of the Peace Treaty. The neutral zone between the two lines was to be abolished immediately and a substantial loan granted. Furthermore, General Smuts would recommend the Powers to have the Hungarian Government invited to the Paris Conference, thus enabling the Hungarians to put forward their point of view. On the other hand, Hungary had to observe the Armistice agreement.

This favourable offer should have been accepted, but Bela Kun, in order to get more declined it. He argued that the acceptance of this offer would mean a second Brest-Litovsk and would be unacceptable to Hungary who was still being dominated by chauvinist elements. He failed to see that even Lenin, in order to gain time and escape war, had accepted a similar offer from the Germans.¹

Bela Kun was convinced that neither England nor France, still less the United States would risk anything on account of the proletarian dictatorship of Hungary because any offensive against his country would have subtle consequences for the Powers. Moreover, no State, already exhausted by a long war, would ever attempt

¹MMTV.D., Vol. VI, part II, pp. 146-8, Stenographed Protocol of the National Congress of Soviets, 17 June 1919.

such new sacrifices.¹

Bela Kun might have succeeded with this risky foreign policy had he accounted for one important aspect. He neglected to count on the existence of the surrounding new States which were biding their time to overrun Hungary.² It was not necessary to the Entente Powers to use their armies against Hungary, the Succession States obligingly assumed that task.³ Soon after General Smuts departure, the Roumanians attacked in the south-west and crossed the river Tisza. The Czechs, exploiting this opportunity, launched an offensive from the north. The French and Serbs had concentrated their forces in the south. And by the end of April the Roumanian Army was advancing towards Budapest.

At this point it was the Socialists who saved the situation. Using the slogan "The Revolution is in danger", they appealed to the workers' socialist conscience to fight for the Fatherland which was now theirs. Battalions were formed in the factories as organized workers' units. Even the active officers, who were violent opponents of Communism, were roused by this general enthusiasm. Surrounded on all sides, the Red Army attacked the

¹ibid, pp. 149-50

²Miller, op. cit., Vol. XVI, pp. 494-5.

³PUSFR., ed. 1946, Vol. VII, pp. 317-322.

Czechs in the north and won several victories. It occupied two-third of Slovakia enabling the Slovaks to form a Soviet Republic of their own.

For a moment the Big Four lapsed into moderation at the unexpected results of their uncompromising attitude. Clemenceau, who saw the time ripe, intervened the second time. In the name of the Allied and Associated Powers he demanded Bela Kun to withdraw from the occupied territories, in return for which he was promised the retreat of Roumanian troops and the conclusion of a definite peace.¹ No sooner had the Hungarian troops withdrawn when Clemenceau's note was disavowed and explained as a "clerical" error.² It was only then that Bela Kun realised that Paris would never conclude peace with a Soviet Republic.³

In this same period Great Britain, unlike France, was concerned to save Hungary from Roumanian occupation. During the negotiations Sir Cuninghame, head of the British Mission, demanded the resignation of Bela Kun and the setting up of a provisional government with dictatorial powers, to be replaced later by a

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part II, pp. 242-7, The Clemenceau Note of June 13, 1919 and Bela Kun's reply; also Miller, Documents, Vol. XVI, CF-65, pp, 399, 406-13.

²"Allied Diplomacy in Hungary", The Nation, (New York), Vol. CIX, p. 665.

³Bela Kun, "Allied Sincerity", *ibid.*, p. 189; also, Miller, *op. cit.*, Vol. XX, p. 353.

government representing all parties. Had Kun accepted these conditions, the blockade would have been lifted and economic help provided. Bohm, who was negotiating in Vienna, went even further. He declared himself ready to arrest and crush Bela Kun with the aid of his army.¹ He was, however, distrusted by Clemenceau, who preferred the Roumanian troops. When Bela Kun reminded Clemenceau of his promise to have the Roumanians evacuate, he received the answer that there would be no further negotiations with his Government.²

Meanwhile the spirit of "defeatism" made progress. Not having any other choice, Bela Kun was forced to accept the ultimatum of Clemenceau, sealing the fate of the Red Army six weeks before its actual downfall.³ The psychological impact of the evacuation was further deepened by the Roumanian refusal of retreat from the Hungarian territories. In the end, the sacrifice of Slovakia had led to nothing.⁴ And the surrender of all gains of the war estranged the masses from the Dictatorship. It was the beginning of the end.

¹Miller, op. cit., Vol. XX, p. 355.

²DBFP, Vol. VI, Document No. 21, pp. 35-6; also Document No. 30, p. 64; Document No. 31, pp. 64-5; Document No. 32, pp. 65-7; Document No. 33, pp. 67-8; Document No. 57, p. 90.

³PUSFR., Vol. VII, pp. 310-1., ed. 1946.

⁴DBFP., Vol. VI, Document No. 38, p. 76; also Document No. 39, p. 77.

In the process of evacuation of the re-occupied territories, the old army officer corps began to go over to the counter-revolutionary Government. It was set up in Szeged¹ under the protection of the French army.² Kunfi's plan for ending the purposeless bloodshed and of consolidating the proletarian State proved futile.³ The Dictatorship could only be maintained by means of military adventures. In order to retain power the slogan that the country was in danger became again the ideological weapon.⁴

Since the beginning of June it was obvious that the Dictatorship could not hold out. Bela Kun sought salvation through a revolution in Vienna. He hoped that a forceful seizure of power might change the equilibrium to his side. The attempt was made under the supervision of one of his emissars. Bettelheim, in July 1919. It was a failure.

The crisis, which had been subdued for the moment, on account of the Viennese events, again came afore. Bela Kun attempted to seek relief in a new campaign, this time against Roumania. By this time the workers completely left the army which

¹A city in South-Hungary.

²R.V. Burks, The Dynamics of Communism in Eastern Europe, (Princeton, 1961), p. 153.

³People's Commissar Sigismund Kunfi held the Commissariat for Education. He was also Minister of Public Welfare in the former Karolyi Government.

⁴MMTV.D., Vol. VI, part II, pp. 312-4, Stenographed Protocol of the Workers', Soldiers' Council of Budapest, 24 June, 1919.

now consisted of nationalist middle class and country people. While the former element was hostile, the latter was definitely disinterested. The troops, apart from their moral deterioration, were badly equipped. But this was not all. The new Chief-of-Staff, Julien, who had worked out the plan for this new offensive, betrayed it to the counter-revolutionaries in Vienna, and to the Szeged Government, who communicated it to the enemy. Until the last moment the Communists were hoping the military aid of Russia, which failed to come.¹ Under these circumstances the Roumanians had no trouble to disperse, in a matter of hours, the dissillusioned, betrayed and abandoned army.²

The defeat on the Roumanian front was not due to the fortune of war but to the result of a long process of decay. Even Bela Kun, in spite of his dogmatism and lack of vision, sensed the coming end. He was well aware that the Dictatorship had internally collapsed. Although he failed to realize

¹In this connection it is interesting to note Louis Fischers' comment. He quotes a telegram wired by the Soviet Commander-in-Chief on March 26, 1919 to Antonov Ovseyenko. According to this message Ovseyenko was to limit activities toward Roumania, to destroy Petliura, and to move forward establishing "...direct intimate contact with the Soviet armies of Hungary". However with Kolchak's offensive in March, Grigoriev's muting in the Ukraine, and with the further possibility of Denikin's desertion, the offensive to help Bela Kun was abandoned.
The Soviets in World Affairs, (London, 1930), Vol I, p. 194.

²DBFP., Document No. 70, pp. 107-11, also Document No. 73, p. 115, Document No. 75, p. 116; Document No. 87, pp. 127-8.

its causes, nevertheless, he admitted both its existence and growing tendency:

"...The paralysis is plainly visible: there is everywhere a deadly fear of every symptom of counter-revolution, and yet we are shrinking back from every political or economic step which is required to set the dictatorship at last on a firm feeling..."¹

Kun was right and his diagnosis correct: the Communist experiment had lost faith in itself. This moral crisis was more deeply expressed by Weltner, president of the Central Executive Committee of the Budapest Workers' Council. He bitterly denounced this Communist experiment:

"...I will only hold this office as long as the Budapest Workers' Council fights with all its strength against self-seeking actions, against looting, and private violence, as long as it insists that the Proletarian Dictatorship was formed not to serve individual interests, but to promote the welfare of the whole Community. Nothing does greater service to the counter-revolution than corruption, looting and robbery..."²

These words spoken just a week before the final collapse, involuntarily put the seal on that Communist experiment. But the leaders of the Comintern refused to give credit to the rumors of betrayal which shifted into Russia from the disintegrating Communist regime of Hungary. On the contrary, to the last moment they kept faith in the final success of the Red Army. When it was

¹MMTVD., Vol. VI, part II, p. 458, Stenographed Protocol of the Federal Executive Committee, 16 July 1919.

²Jacob Wiltner's speech at the sitting of Central Executive Committee of the Budapest Workers Council, July 16, 1919. MMTVD., ibid., part II, p. 195.

obvious, on June 12, that the collapse is a matter of weeks, Zinoviev in a letter to Bela Kun declared:

"...The whole of the Communist International is proud of its Hungarian section which has achieved such gigantic work during a short space of time. We are firmly convinced that the foundation of the unity of the whole of the Hungarian proletariat laid down by you in March, 1919, will be unshakable..."¹

Not until July 24 did Zinoviev recognize a real threat to the Hungarian Soviet Republic. He saw that a new "crusade" was being prepared against Hungary, but still felt confident:

"...the Hungarian workers...will also upon this occasion be able to cope with the reparation attack which is being prepared for them..."²

Consequently the Communists blamed everybody except themselves for the failure. First, they accused the masses, their lack of decision. The fact, that the conditions which brought the workers to the brink of revolt could have been created by themselves, was simply ruled out. Secondly, they blamed the Social Democratic Party. It was the paradox of the Hungarian Labour movement that the Social Democrats, who were opportunist during their entire history in this very last period, remained faithful to the cause. The failure, therefore, was not due to the "betrayal" of the Socialist

¹G. Zinoviev, "Letter to Bela Kun", The Communist International (London), No. 3, (July, 1919), p. 376.

²"To the Workers of the Allied Countries", *ibid.*, No. 4 (August, 1919, p. 99.

leaders but to the fact that the workers were disillusioned of Communism. While the Hungarian workers had never been seriously communistic, the experiences of the proletarian dictatorship made them definitely anti-revolutionaries.

Lenin's warnings could not stop the dissolution of the proletarian dictatorship of Hungary. Russia took the resignation of Bela Kun as a serious setback to the victory of world Communism. Again Social Democracy was condemned:

"...a great act of treason has been committed. The Soviet Government of Hungary has fallen under the pressure of the Imperialist robbers and the monstrous treason of the Socialists traitors.

...The brand of Cain is now on the forehead of this party. It betrayed the proletariat, the revolution, the glorious party of the Hungarian Communists, it betrayed the International. Entering into a secret agreement with the Versailles murderers, as well as with their own counter revolutionaries; drawing their strength from the gold of the imperialists and depending upon the bayonets of the executioners it overthrew the government of the Communist proletariat..."¹

Lenin, criticising Bela Kun, saw the cause of defeat in the fusion with the Social Democrats. He believed that the Socialists took advantage of the inexperience of the Communist Party in Hungary. He reviewed how the Social Democrats were taken into power with the Communists, oblivious to the fact that exactly

¹G. Zinoviev, "To the Proletariat of the World", The Communist International, (London), No. 4, (August, 1919), p. 106.

the opposite happened.¹ He characterised the Socialists:

"...vacillated, became cowardly and run off to the bourgeoisie... directly sabotaging the proletarian revolution and betraying it..."²

Eugene Varga shared Lenin's thesis. However, he added that the defeat had been enhanced by the weakness and cowardice of the leaders of international social democratic brotherhood, who, in Roumania, Austria and Czechoslovakia not only refused to come to the aid of Hungary but helped their respective governments in aggressive attack on the Red Army of Hungary.³

It was "To All" that Bela Kun, just after the Dictatorship had been formed, had addressed his first message. And it was "To All" again that he appealed in the final hour, when the People's Commissars were getting ready for flight.

The final fight however was recommended to the masses and not the Communist leaders. By now Bela Kun's speech, his pledge: "...we must fight to the last round of ammunition...", was long forgotten.⁴ Now, when the proletariat was suffering under the

¹ Lenin probably based his belief on a report by Laszlo Rudas. This report was later published in the Pravda under the title, The Social Democratic Party in Hungary (Pravda, 13 April 1919). One should however note, that Rudas at that time had been in Moscow, consequently he could not exactly know the circumstances of that fusion.

² V.I. Lenin, Sochineniia, 3ed. (Moscow, Leningrad, 1932), Vol. XXV, p. 33.

³ Eugene Varga, "La Dictature du Proletariat", Librairie de L'Humanité, (Paris, 1922), p. XXII.

⁴ MMTVD., Vol. VI, part I, p. 390.

attack of the "White Terror"¹, he took a special train, not to his promised place at the barrickades, but to escape to Vienna.

On August 1 the Central Workers' Council of Budapest held its last meeting. Bela Kun in his farewell message, once more, put the blame on the economic, political and military conditions. He further accused the proletariat:

"...it is not that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat should have perished had it had class conscious revolutionary proletarian masses to rely on..."²

This revelation, that of the absence of a class conscious revolutionary proletariat behind the Communist movement, was the theme of the Hungarian Labour movement. It proved that although it was possible for a small group of Communists to mislead and bend the masses of the working classes, this could not have lasted, since the Hungarian masses were not revolutionary in themselves. It was, at best, only a minority that abused the principles of freedom. True, they succeeded in gaining power, through underground activities and terrorism, but it lasted only 101 days. It was, ironically, destroyed by another dictatorship which is known in history as the "White Terror".

¹The regime that followed the "Red Terror" of Bela Kun is known as the Counter-revolution of Admiral Miklos Horthy, or the "White Terror".

²Bela Kun, Speech., Institute of the Library of the History of the Party, Archives, (Budapest), 451/1/VIIII/1919.

Conclusion.

In the half century that passed since its foundation until 1919, the Hungarian Labour movement had continuously grown and culminated in the Communist experiment of Bela Kun. It remains for the student of History to draw conclusions concerning the political, social, and economic aspects which favoured and hindered the evolution of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary; to trace the main forces which shaped and eventually led that Party into two revolutions, and finally to show through the past, the future possibilities of Hungary in connection with the general situation in the Danube Basin and the Balkans.

Our first conclusion which covers the period up to the rise of Michael Karolyi can be summed up as a series of hopes and disappointments. The working classes, in their search for equilibrium, were ever hoping that their lives would be better, that the power of the ruling classes would be broken, and that eventually their equality of status would be achieved. Instead of success there was always failure. The progress which was made at the price of heavy sacrifices vanished away during the months of the proletarian dictatorship. The Idea, which the true Socialists continuously fought for, was never realized.

As we have seen, the industrialization of Hungary began relatively late in comparison to that of Western Europe. Consequently, the industrial working class immediately fell under

the influence of Western social ideas. The West, -with its order, social institutions, and universal parliamentary representation- was the example. This became the ideal for the Hungarian Labour movement, with parliamentary representation as its centre of interest.

Franchise, a basic human right as it is, from its first request discredited this young and inexperienced class. A great offense was committed. A class, not even formed, requested something which was the "privilege" of historic classes. At once they were suspected and branded as the sympathisers of the French Revolution.

The evolution of the movement, moreover, was hindered by lack of efficient leadership. The history of the movement was a continuous internal struggle. The Social Democratic Party from the very beginning, and the Associations before that, was split by incompetent leaders who were ready to undermine the movement for personal interests.

The Western movements, weak themselves, could not properly help Hungary in this respect. The direction that came from the West was twofold. On one hand it was the weak lead of the Second International, easily counter-balanced by the Government. On the other hand, it was the influence of orthodox Marxism. Since the Hungarian worker respected authority, the revolutionary influence could not materialize. At large, the Western revolutionary leaders were singled out. They were expelled by those who were able

to serve the movement yet retained their good standing with the Government.

In retrospect it was not a coincidence that the Labour movement was, during its half a century struggle, not able to send one labour deputy to the Hungarian Parliament. On the surface everything was smooth. The working class expanded and, compared to the agricultural labourers, relatively prospered. Although they did not give up their hope of universal Franchise, nor did they - in lack of competent leaders - seriously fight for it. Before the war no Socialist had conceived the idea that the proletariat could win in a state of disunion. However, the outbreak of the war had precisely brought about such a state. The leaders, upon Western example, refrained themselves from the idea of class struggle at the moment when these ideas, for the first time for many decades, would have had practical revolutionary implications. It was a moral point of view and its acceptance would have depended on the conviction that it is the duty of a conscious worker to be a revolutionary. The Hungarian workers, however, thought, at that moment, their duty was to defend their country. The national allegiance had proved to be stronger than the social one.

Their dissatisfaction grew. The war was coming to an end. The workers, who in peace had efficiently been kept under control, were awakened by the terrible sacrifices of the war. There were demanding an answer to: "who is responsible?" The

peace wave which swept over Europe made things worse. The patriotic slogans of 1914 were long forgotten. President Wilson's message gave genuine hope not only to the workers but the oppressed nationalities. They had no more desire to stay within the Empire as they had desire for fight against their kinsmen over the trenches.

The dissatisfaction was rightful, for the signs of dissolution were everywhere. But who saw them? Who could answer them? Only a few to whom nobody listened. The ruling classes certainly did not. Nor did the leaders of the Right-wing of the Social Democratic Party. They were instead supporting the regime until the last. Consequently, the ones who did believe were in minority. There were the progressive elements of the bourgeois and Social Democratic parties. But again they were forced out of action. On one hand, the Government branded them as irresponsible, Bolshevik revolutionists, on the other hand, without popular support, they were isolated.

Their isolation was finally broken by the masses. By the workers who at last wanted to redress half a century's grievances. Their transformation of war into peace was a continuous process of nationwide strikes and disturbances. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was a stimulating factor. Since the fate of the Central Powers was doomed, there was a return to the original demand: universal Franchise.

Peace and universal social rights by that time,

however, meant more than just to grant the right of ballot to everyone. The war was irrevocably lost which gave the national minorities a chance to regain their freedom. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire meant the dissolution of the old, historic Hungary as well. In this social convulsion the power was shifting to the Left. Labour, however, had no leaders. The leaders of the Right-wing were neither capable for the task of transforming the old Hungary into a new nationalist State, nor were they trusted by anyone. The man who eventually distinguished himself for this task came neither from the rank of Labour nor from the rolls of the progressive intelligentsia. He was an aristocrat, Count Michael Karolyi.

The Labour, as the saviour of national integrity, is our second conclusion though its role was negative. Its efforts were passive, even hostile. The Social Democratic Party being incapable of leadership welcomed the progressive elements. Yet on account of ignorance, private interests, and jealousy - blocked every effort of the Government of the October Revolution.

The history of the Karolyi epoch is the struggle of the high hopes and high ideals of the Labour movement. Hungary was an aristocratic community which still regarded itself as a Great Power. All Hungarian leaders of the early Twentieth Century meant to preserve Hungary as a great State. Tisza and his class thought to do it by becoming the ally of Germany, they were even willing to shake off the Habsburgs if necessary. Karolyi took the opposite

course. He wanted to abandon the German alliance and to bring Hungary back to the association with the Western democracies which Kossuth had aspired in 1848. Others also dreamt the same policy. However, Karolyi was the only one who was ready to carry it to its logical conclusion. To get away from Germany meant the abandonment of racial oppression inside Hungary. Alliance with the democracies meant the Hungary must become a democracy also. By the time of the World War Karolyi was the advocate of universal suffrage, of national equality, and of the division of land among the peasants. He intended to destroy "historic" Hungary so as to preserve her greatness in a new form. However, it would be mistaken to claim that he foresaw how high the price of this policy would be. But as the price became clearer he continued to be willing to pay it. If Karolyi's lead had been followed before the war or even during it, Hungary would have had to suffer, but she would have survived. In 1918 it was too late. The national minorities claimed their independence. Hungary failed to break free in time from the Habsburg dynasty; and instead was involved in its ruin.

Karolyi during his five months in power brought the Monarchy to an end; he became the first President of independent Hungary, and he tried to reform Central Europe on Wilsonian principles. He failed; but the fault did not lie in him. It lay in the "Great Magyars" who hated him. They hated him for what they termed the surrender of the ideals of the Magyar State. They antagonised

the masses from him. They labeled him as a traitor for all Hungarians. From the first his fall was inevitable. Hungarians have blamed the Entente for what followed, but in reality the core of decay came from within. The wave of Bolshevism which swept over Hungary was in reality the inevitable consequence of the traditional Magyar policy.

The greatest portion of responsibility for his failure, however, fell on the Socialists. The Revolution was a social and a national one. It was the victory of the oppressed, exploited people. It was led by the Radical Socialists because the Labour leaders were unable to assume revolutionary leadership. On the contrary, they betrayed the cause. These leaders, on whom Karolyi had to rely, had neither influence in the country districts nor understanding of rural problems, simply they had no sympathy with the peasants. They discredited the Government, and in turn, they were discredited by the Communists.

The intellectuals were also responsible, as they were hesitant and unstable. The Civil Service was Magyar, indeed, but utterly out of sympathy with the Revolution. The forces of counter-revolution, though badly disorganized at the outset were always powerful, and soon regained control.

The responsibility finally lies with the victorious Powers: Great Britain, France, and the United States, who refused to see that a truly democratic Hungary could be a dependable ally. Their policy first drove Hungary to Communism and then forced on her a reactionary tyranny which was equally detestable.

The Communist experiment of Bela Kun which was given birth in the failure of the Karolyi Government, is our third conclusion. The immediate cause of Karolyi's fall is attributed to his foreign policy. He was forced to make peace, which the people wanted, but was reluctant to accept its terms on which it could be made. The result of this patriotic anger and economic discontent, arising out of privation, turned public feeling against Karolyi. This anti-Government movement, however, was not spontaneous. Behind it stood the Social Democratic Party forged together by the demagoguery of Bela Kun and his associates, as they could not resist the Communist infiltration. Karolyi pressed from all sides, and to avoid civil war, saw the solution in the formation of a Socialist Government.

But that was too late. When he was reduced to rely on the Socialists and to advise them to come to terms with Bela Kun, he was in effect, unconsciously giving up democracy; for he was putting into office a Government which could have no hold on most of the country and was, therefore, bound to be condemned. As for Karolyi, he ended his career by being forced out of office by the Communists with the approval of his former Socialist supporters.

The Socialists, with their prestige undermined by the propaganda of the Communists, knew that they were much too weak to bear the power alone. There was no one to whom they could look for help except the Communists, who, in turn claimed the leadership. These were the circumstances under which the two party united and accepted the theory of Proletarian Dictatorship.

The Communists were convinced that their struggle would be different from their former underground activities now that they had found the true method, and that their fight would not end in a failure. The basic conviction of Communism was that it only needed a true "Bolshevist" party applying the appropriate tactics, in order to win. Therefore every defeat -and during the proletarian dictatorship there were many- brought a change in the tactics, leaving the final goal unaltered. At the beginning of his movement, Bela Kun applied the policy of collaboration with the Social Democrats. The importance of democracy in the day-to-day struggles of the workers and of the lower classes in general was emphasized. In the meantime, the Communist Party both in membership and in influence grew. Everything seemed to be going smoothly until the decisive moment when they actually seized the power. At this point onward the collaborators as Social Democrats, broke down and were followed eventually by the Communists themselves. Bela Kun was convinced that the failure was due to wrong ideology. In taking account of the pacifist and constitutional "prejudices" of the masses he blamed the Socialists. He overlooked the fact that the actual take over by his group meant a complete change of policy. Suddenly the Communists refused to acknowledge any difference between democracy on one hand and autocracy on the other. All contacts with the democratic parties were broken off. Attempts were made to split the trade unions. Bona fide participations in the day-to-day struggles of the masses were decried as "opportunism". Propaganda of revolution took the place of every other sort of

propaganda.

In retrospect, with the dictatorship of Bela Kun it is important to understand why it happened as it did. When Bela Kun and his associates came to power they were convinced that help would come from Russia. This promise was their hope till the end. The fact should not be overlooked that in 1919 the Communist leaders of Russia were still convinced of the early arrival of revolution over the greater part of Europe, and were doing all they could to stir it up wherever they saw a chance. The deeply disturbed conditions in Hungary and the severe repression practised by its people made that country seem to them eminently ripe for revolution; therefore, they had no hesitation to send their Russian trained professional revolutionaries to bring it about.

To overestimate the role of Russia, however, would be a great mistake. Nor one should regard the actions of the Communist Party of Hungary as simply the result of "orders from Moscow". Russia's influence upon Hungarian Communism was rooted both in its prestige and in its promise of military help. This influence over the Communist Party of Hungary, moreover, was as much of the result as the cause of the evolution of Communism outside Russia. Bela Kun, in spite of all the prestige of the Bolshevik Revolution of Russia and of Lenin, did not accept "orders" from Moscow. He refused, during his dictatorship, to sever the organic links with the Social Democrats and, which was more decisive, failed to follow Lenin's agrarian policy.

Even if the Communists had shown much more sagacity in handling the peasant problem, their chance of lasting success would have been practically nil. The Hungarian working class was too weak and too alien from the rest of the country to be able to establish itself as a ruling class. That so many of the Socialists and Trade Unionists followed Bela Kun into his adventure was a sign of the immaturity of the working class movement which had neither tasted power and responsibility before 1918, nor became integrated with the main body of the people after it. Intensifying this was certain hostile feeling by the Allied Powers and the belligerent neighbours. Given support Karolyi might have succeeded in stabilizing the country under democratic rule. At any rate he was not given the chance.

As for Bela Kun, his corrupt and incompetent rule made Hungary immune from any further attack of Communism. After 1919 the Hungarian Labour movement was wiped out. It made no real recovery till the Russians marched in to set up the "People's Democracy" of 1945, and that was by no means the final chapter in Hungary's tragic history.

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